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ABSTRACT

The third volume in the NCTE Distinguished Lectures Series, this collection of papers includes (1) William Stafford on poetry and the language of everyday life, (2) Fred Stocking linking Shakespeare to his time and all time by analysing "temperance" in Sonnet 18, (3) Alan Downer discussing the nature of comedy in drama and the universal search for a harmonious relationship between men and women, (4) Nancy Larrick showing some of the effects of a changing world, with its emphasis on violence, on readers and potential readers, (5) Walker Gibson discussing composition and style as a reflection of and a creator of character, and (6) Harold Allen advocating language as the tie that binds together the elements of the English curriculum. (See also ED 028 160 for another volume in the Series.) (This document previously announced as ED 033 946.) (RH)

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The HUES of ENGLISH

NCTE 1969 DISTINGUISHED LECTURES

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Foreword

The National Council of Teachers of English has been served with honor and distinction this past year by six scholars who have presented lectures throughout the land in its Dis inguished Lecture Program. The program is now three years old, and we are pleased to publish these lectures under the title *The Hues of English*.

The topics presented are as diverse and diffuse as the colors of the spectrum: language study, a Shakespearean sonnet, composition, poetry, drama, and reading. Yet as Professor Harold Allen reminds us in his lecture, there is—and we need—a tie that binds. There must be an indispensable commitment to a study of our language, in whatever genre it appears, whoever the user. Language is our business.

In a truly stimulating and thoroughly acceptable fashion he chides us teachers of the English language arts for our neglect of and inattention to the tie and challenges us to make our efforts language centered. The possibilities for investigation as he outlines them are limitless and boldly imaginative.

Let me mention the other lecturers, even at the risk of doing violence to their intent and effect. Walker Gibson discusses composition as a reflection of and creator of character. William Stafford discusses poetry and the language of everyday life, while Fred Stocking analyzes Shakespeare's "temperance" as epitomized by Sonnet 18. Alan Downer's topic, "The Game of Love and Marriage," treats the nature of comedy and the universal search for a harmonious relationship between men and women. Nancy Larrick shows some of the effects of our changing world, with its emphasis on violence, on readers and potential readers.

The Hues of English represents the best that is in us as scholars, as humanists, as teachers. It, along with the preceding two volumes, truly is evidence that the cloak of English is a garment of many hues, all bright, all worthy of our gaze. The Council is pleased, once again, to make the papers available to the entire profession.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
August 1969

WILLIAM A. JENKINS
President, NCTE

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Today's Poets and the Language of Everyday Life

William Stafford

WILLIAM STAFFORD, poet and associate professor in English at Lewis and Clark College, has published collections of his poetry, including *West of Your City, Traveling through the Dark* (which won the National Book Award for Poetry in 1962), and *The Rescued Year*; many of his poems have been anthologized and have appeared in major national periodicals. Prose works include *Down in My Heart*, recording his experiences as a conscientious objector, and *Friends to This Ground* for NCTE, a statement on literature. Dr. Stafford is a member of the NCTE Commission on Literature and in 1966 organized the Festival of Contemporary Poetry for the NCTE Houston convention. He has been at Lewis and Clark College since 1948, with the exception of a few years; e.g., in 1966–1967 he held a Guggenheim Fellowship. This lecture was delivered at Mesa County Valley Schools, Grand Junction, Colorado; Western State College, Gunnison, Colorado; Snake River Center for the Improvement of Instruction, Idaho Falls, Idaho; Longview School District, Longview, Washington; Safford High School, Safford, Arizona; and College of Southern Utah, Cedar City, Utah.

Talking along in our not quite prose way
we all know it is not quite prose we speak,
and it is time to notice this intolerable wavering
innumerably touching, before we sink.

It is time to notice, I say, the freezing doubts
hesitating toward us from other people's gray heaven;
listen—they are falling not quite silently
and under them still you and I go walking. . . .

Maybe there are trumpets in the houses we pass
and redbirds watching from the evergreens—
but nothing will happen until we pause
to flame what we know, before any signal's given.

Haven't you had that feeling? You are part of a world in which new things are about to happen. The scenes around you, the people you meet, and the language you use—these are all converging on something new: out of this pattern you find yourself making a discovery, saying something that you hadn't thought of before. You are part of a creative moment. It happens to you. It happens to everyone, on occasion; and perhaps that little moment is a part of anyone's action whenever he does one of those mysterious things we forget we do not understand—thinking, talking, writing, figuring something out.

There are people who seek that feeling, who trust their careers to something no more reliable than the recurrent sensing and grasping of opportunity at the edge of awareness. Some of these creating persons engage with materials we all share; the material for consideration here is language. My attempt will be to consider how it feels to work with language, and in particular how certain attitudes and processes today lead writers to find what we experience as "current literature."

If my ways seem roundabout, if I neglect approaches and topics you think crucial, please remember this: all of what I say is tentative, like the process I am trying to locate. And my sus-

picion is that we often fool each other when we approach this topic. I am ready to be judged unorthodox.

Here is a statement about ordinary communication, and then a question: If you are telling about something that happened, you can say, "This happened, and then this happened, and then—related because of such and such—this happened." You have a guide, a pattern; you are sustained by recurrent checking with place, event, sequence, consequence. But what if you are writing about something that did not happen? What guides you? It is not pure chance, apparently; and on the other hand it is not something fixed and dependable through extraneous determinations. It is not something someone else can tell you. It is not something that exists already. But *something*. What is that something?

Let me extend the puzzle a little. Even when you tell what did happen, or even when you use the language to deliver a pattern determined or influenced by some outside guide—like "How to Ride a Bicycle"—we assume that your own self's judgments and processes find their way into the telling. When you tell what happened, it is different from when another person tells what happened. Something has intervened. For convenience I'll opt for thinking of that something, that intervening element, as related to the earlier something, the influence that guides you in purely "creative" work.

Neither description and narration and exposition, on the one hand, nor "creative expression," on the other, is accomplished without this little something, this intervening element under our scrutiny now. Your participation in even the most workaday kind of talk or writing will require of you a degree of inner participation; you will be involved. There is no way to avoid this involvement; one must accept it. And in the arts this involvement is accepted, sought, relied on. For an artist, the materials of his activity become the partners of the self, and with a wonderfully free kind of reverberation the artist embarks on a process that eventuates in something new, unprecedented, "original."

The language we speak—the language anyone speaks—carries in it much more than the casual inquirer can know. Because routine uses of language predominantly force our attention onto its signaling effects, we find ourselves drifting continually into conceptual speculation and neglecting other aspects of language. Some of the other aspects, however—the sound, allusion, mechanical influences—open out into the realm of discovery when the problems of creativity, or the opportunities of creativity, are kept to the fore.

We all participate day after day in the language element, and we share its hidden pitfalls and bonuses. What follows is not restricted to poetry; the assertions have to do with our own involvements, all the time.

Let me turn to several ways in which language influences us in ways that greatly exceed the realizations of casual users in everyday life.

For one thing, words and phrases carry their own physical influence. The mechanical production of words enforces its own variety of feelings and meanings. For example, consider Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont":

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones . . .

If we pause to consider the language here, we see at once that its mechanical production is part of its meaning: the signals have become active in their own right. This poem, a lament, has hidden in the syllables at the ends of its lines this pattern, in this order: o, o, o, o, o, o, o, o, a, o, a, o, a, o.

We could multiply examples of this sort, but a consideration that may already have occurred to you may allow us to extend the range of examples: Is it the mechanics of making the words that imposes a meaning or it is something else? Might we be influenced more by association of sounds than by the effort of throat, lips, tongue, in the sound's production? Yes—sound associations apparently nudge our feelings often in language. So influential is

this aspect of language that a native speaker might be able to communicate with another native speaker through nonsense syllables, relying only on sound associations, using syllables that have become associated with meanings by virtue of clusters of related sound and meaning. Consider a group of words like slide, slither, slick, sludge . . . We could all slosh our way to some slimy convergence of feeling in that group. Or consider skid, ski, skate, scat . . .

The existence of such clusters of reinforcing syllables leads me to speculate that perhaps all through our language, less evident but just as pervasively influential, there are lines of force, areas of persuasion and power, not evident to us as speakers but operative when happened upon or deliberately chosen by lucky or talented people around us. Just as the jet plane rides the jet stream, though the passengers do not know it, I assume that speakers and writers all around us are either exceeding expected effect, or being baffled by invisible obstacles, as they use the language. Writers benefit from these jet streams—or underground streams—in the language.

Once a person enters the language as a participant, once he begins to know that we all talk along in a not quite prose way, he has become available for sustained, incremental composition. The view offered here suggests a kind of reciprocity between the overt, intellectual processes we usually identify when we write or talk and the covert, emotional influences always present and always acting, but not always recognized. And the view put forward here invites us to set up several issues or challenges that confront ordinary formulations about "truth," "form," and "craft" in literature. It is at this juncture that we may more clearly engage with the implicit promise in the title used for this paper: *Today's* Poets and the Language of *Everyday* Life.

Here is the formulation, made direct and confident, for convenience:

When you make a poem you merely speak or write the

> language of every day, capturing as many bonuses as possible and economizing on losses: that is, you come awake to what always goes on in language, and you use it to the limit of your ability and your power of attention at the moment. You always fail, to some extent, since the opportunities are infinite—but think of the extent of your failure in ordinary conversation! Poetry bears the brunt, though: for in trying for the best it calls attention to its vivid failures.
>
> All of us know how to swim in the language: most of the time we go slithering along, giving our hearers or readers a generally adequate communication, but for the most part being somewhat irresponsible about achievement. After all, prose is clear, pure, realistic, accurate, and regular—isn't it? But meanwhile there exist always those sleeping resources in language—connotations, sound reinforcements, allusions, myth-residues, and so on. These elements flicker on and off in anything we say or write, be it prose or poetry. Poets try to live up to these resources.

Let me try to draw the lines that the above attitude induces between certain orthodox views and the current practices of most poets. Consider rhyme. If you assume that the language has mostly heterogeneous syllables, with some that match up for sound and thus provide reinforcement at chosen places, then a rhyme pattern may seem to you the way to use the resources of sound in poetry. But if you assume that all syllables relate to each other in sound, that the language—including prose—is one shimmering set of opportunities for rhyme, chime, contrast, and fishtailing associations, then you may enter the language with too many options valued for you to be content with a preestablished pattern.

Again, if you assume that the language of poetry can be legitimately heightened by a rhythm that finds its justification in

a measure, in a meter, then traditional forms may be essential. But if you assume that traditional forms attain their effects through possessing opportunity for the varied, seething pulse of all language, prose or poetry, you may opt for entering that pulse and guiding yourself in a way too various for metrical classification.

Many, and I believe most, of today's poets are entering the language we all use, are learning to swim in it, use its jet streams, accept its troublesome but glorious options.

A Message from the Wanderer

Today outside your prison I stand
and rattle my walking stick: Prisoners,
listen; you have relatives outside. And
there are thousands of ways to escape.

Years ago I bent my skill to keep my
cell locked, had chains smuggled to me in pies,
and shouted my plans to jailers;
but always new plans occurred to me,
or the new heavy locks bent hinges off,
or some stupid jailer would forget
and leave the keys.

Inside, I dreamed of constellations—
those feeding creatures outlined by stars,
their skeletons a darkness between jewels,
heroes that exist only where they are not.

Thus freedom always came nibbling my thought,
just as—often, in light, on the open hills—
you can pass an antelope and not know
and look back, and then—even before you see—
there is something wrong about the grass.
And then you see.

That's the way everything in the world is waiting.

Now—these few words, and then I'm
gone: We may have to travel a terrible road.
Tell everyone just to remember his
name, and remind others, later, when we
find each other. Tell the little ones
to cry and then go to sleep, curled up
where they can. And if any of us get lost,
if any of us cannot come all the way—
remember: there will come a time when
all we have said and all we have hoped
will be all right.

There will be that form in the grass.[1]

[1] This poem first appeared in *Word in the Desert: The Critical Quarterly Tenth Anniversary Number*, edited by C. B. Cox and A. E. Dyson, 1968 (Oxford University Press).

Shakespeare's Temperance

Fred H. Stocking

FRED H. STOCKING, professor of English at Williams College since 1940, was chairman of the Examination Committee and Chief Reader in English for the Advanced Placement Program. He has taught in the John Hay Fellows Institutes in the Humanities at Williams since the program was organized in 1959 and has been director of a summer institute at Bennington College for several years. On leave from Williams during the 1961–1962 school year, Dr. Stocking was a visiting professor at Portland State College; in spring 1968 he was a scholar in residence at the Fairfax County Public Schools. That summer, he was a visiting professor at the University of Hawaii, Hilo Campus. Presently in NCTE he is a director representing the College Section and a member of the Committee on *English for the Academically Talented Student* and the Committee on Inductive Teaching. He has also contributed numerous articles to NCTE and other publications. Dr. Stocking's lecture was scheduled for St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas; Marshfield Senior High School, Coos Bay, Oregon; and the University of North Carolina, Charlotte Campus, North Carolina.

Fred H. Stocking

A few years ago I assigned to my honors students the task of analyzing and evaluating the critical assumptions underlying the syllabus of our course in Elizabethan literature. One of my students strongly objected to what we of the English department then regarded as a deft and telling maneuver—namely, our decision to begin this course with a study of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, a lively play offering such a vivid and variegated display of Elizabethan interests that it served, we felt, as a superb introduction to the literature of this glorious period in English history.

My honors student disapproved of our decision. He felt that we had insulted Shakespeare by associating him with anything so puny as a period. Shakespeare, he proclaimed, was no mere Elizabethan. Like Ben Jonson, he felt that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time."

Matthew Arnold, dean of Victorian critics, shared the sentiments of Ben Jonson and my student, addressing Shakespeare as a gigantic and godlike figure who condescended to walk the earth for a while in the guise of one who lives and dies within time but whose self-generated and immortal wisdom serenely dwells far above the petty questionings and particular pains of any one moment in history.

> Others abide our question [wrote Arnold]. Thou art free.
> We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
> Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill
> That to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
> Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
> Making the Heaven of Heavens his dwelling-place,
> Spares but the cloudy border of his base
> To the foil'd searching of mortality:
> And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
> Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
> Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at. Better so!
>
> All weakness that impairs, all griefs that bow,
> Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

Romantic utterances like these, whether bumptious (in the manner of an undergraduate) or lugubrious (in the manner of a Matthew Arnold), arouse my pedagogical instincts. I feel a powerful urge to show these boys, first, that Shakespeare's works are thoroughly steeped in the prejudices, tastes, and literary conventions of the Renaissance and, second, that this fact in no way diminishes his greatness as an artist.

A keen sense of history is a central feature of the intellectual sophistication which a liberal arts college hopes to develop in its students. Any senior, for example, whether taking a prelaw, premedicine, prebusiness, or any other sort of preprofessional examination, should be able to answer correctly the following question:

"To what year would you assign the following quotation? First, read the quotation; then, notice the four modest rectangles which are arranged beneath it, each rectangle accompanied by a date; finally, use your pencil to fill the appropriate rectangle with a neat black smudge." The quotation is in the form of a question:

> What was the Temperature of the Weather at the Birth of our Saviour?—Was it similar to that of a cold Christmas night in England? . . . The Gospels tell us of the coldness of the night preceding the Crucifixion; but they say nothing as to the temperature of the weather at the birth of our Saviour. Artists and writers . . . seem to prefer now-a-days to represent the night of the Nativity as in all respects similar to an English winter's night. Is this correct?

Beneath this quotation, four virgin rectangles are placed beside the following four dates: 1656, 1756, 1856, and 1956.

An alert college senior should immediately sense that such a concern with the exact temperature of Bethlehem "at the Birth of our Saviour," as well as such an implied disapproval of those liars among artists who portray the Nativity in terms of an English winter, reflects the ingenuous Positivist preoccupations of the

Victorian era, and that the rectangle standing beside the year 1856 is the one which deserves the honor of a smudge.

I have invented this examination question, but the quotation is authentic. It appeared in a periodical dated December 13, 1856; and a week or so later on January 10, 1857, the magazine published a reply which quoted an authority on the meteorology of Palestine to show that snow does fall in the Holy Land and further observed that, even though there had been much dispute as to the actual season in which the Nativity took place, "the fact that the shepherds were tending their flocks in the open air" was "no argument against its occurring in winter." Soon there was a vigorous reply to this argument, and a hot controversy was under way.

This whole controversy reeks of the nineteenth century because of its obsessive concern with the factual truth of the Bible. We of the twentieth century tend to feel that the issue of the Bible's literal or factual truth is of little importance in comparison to another issue: namely, the tremendous value of the psychological, ethical, and philosophic insights which the Bible embodies in legend, myth, and quasi-history. Typical of our century is a meeting, some years ago, of the Committee on Research of the Society of Economic Geology. The chairman of this committee put the question squarely to his colleagues: "Now's the time to let us have it," he said. "What is the most needed research for us ore-diggers?" There was a dull silence until one of those present said, "Well, I'll stick my neck out. I suggest that we scan the literature, and that wherever we see the word 'obvious' we stick the spade in there. There's where we need some research."

The delightful fellow who told me this anecdote was a distinguished scientist who left home in 1914. Before he left, his father said to him, "Son, I have nothing to give you but this one bit of advice: The surest thing you know . . . ain't."

This father reflects certain biases of his era, just as Shakespeare reflects certain biases of the Renaissance. Yet this fact in

no way diminishes the value of either the twentieth-century father or the Elizabethan poet. In support of this contention I invite you to examine Shakespeare's well-known Sonnet 18 and to see not only the many ways in which it reflects Renaissance habits of mind but also the various ways in which it reveals the literary mind of Shakespeare working in perfect control of his medium.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest;
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

A routine collection of footnotes for this poem includes a reminder that in Shakespeare's calendar the month of May ran almost to mid-June of our calendar; that "date" means a terminal date, as of a lease; that the "eye of heaven" is the sun; that line 7 should be translated "every beautiful thing eventually loses its beauty"; that "nature's changing course" means nature's standard course or procedure in causing all things to change; that "to owe" means "to own or possess"; that those "eternal lines" are the lines of this very poem; and that line 12 means "when, in the long-enduring lines of this poem, you become a part of—or fused with—time, as, say, a vine grows to a tree."

Both the beginning and the ending of this sonnet offer com-

monplaces of Renaissance poetry. When Shakespeare asks, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" he reminds us that, by the late 1590's, comparisons between the beloved and things universally regarded as beautiful had been tediously iterated and reiterated in swarms of sonnets. Shakespeare's use of a question in the first line would also be familiar. It is as though Shakespeare, while doodling or groping for some way in which to start still another sonnet, had scribbled, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" and then answered, to himself, "Before I commit myself to this simile I shall have to investigate its implications."

Equally commonplace is the sonnet's ending which asserts that this poem will successfully resist the destructive force of Time and will thereby immortalize the beloved. Literary scholars have richly demonstrated how this theme recurs in the poetry of Pindar, Theocritus, Horace, and Ovid; furthermore, it is a theme which grew increasingly attractive in the Renaissance, when men were beginning to think less and less about a future sojourn in the congenial company of eternal souls and to brood more and more on whether they would be remembered by future generations of men on this earth.

Here is a poem, then, which opens with one commonplace and closes with quite a different commonplace. The logical gap between them is easily felt if you jump from the start to the finish:

Opening question: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Closing answer: My verse will make you immortal.

How does Shakespeare manage to leap from this question to this answer? A quick analysis of the poem's structure reveals that he doesn't leap at all; he moves from one to the other through an orderly series of definite steps.

Shakespeare's first response to his opening question, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" is to note that the beloved surpasses a summer's day in two distinct qualities:

Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

Shakespeare then proceeds to illustrate these two ideas in a backhanded way: not by showing how the beloved is *more* beautiful and *more* temperate, but rather by showing how summer is *less* beautiful and *less* temperate. Line 3 illustrates summer's imperfect temperateness:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

That is, a summer's day is guilty of a failure in moderation, or steadiness, as it vacillates between calm air and rough winds. And line 4 illustrates the other idea, summer's imperfect beauty:

And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Here we learn that the beauty of a summer's day is *not* presented as less intense or less vivid than that of the beloved, but as less durable. Its life span is shorter.

These illustrations are immediately followed by two more: first, a pair of lines again showing the intemperateness of a summer's day as it vacillates—this time—between excessive heat and cloudiness:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd:

then a pair of lines once more dramatizing the short duration of summer's beauty by asserting that all beautiful things are destroyed either by accident or by the process of change to which everything in nature is subjected:

And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd.

Usually "untrimm'd" is drably footnoted as "reduced from a state of perfection." Yet this term, implying the manipulation of a trimming knife, is typical of Shakespeare, who frequently uses the familiar medieval image of Time as armed with a power-

ful and keenly sharpened blade. "Nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defense," he writes in one sonnet; and in another he asks his Muse to protect his beloved's beauty from Time's "scythe and crooked knife."

The adjective *trim*, in Shakespeare's day, regularly meant "beautiful," as in Shakespeare's own poetry where we read of "flowers . . . sweet, their colours fresh and trim." The verb *to trim* meant—as it still does—"to make more beautiful," and this could be done either by adding decoration (as in trimming a Christmas tree) or by removing ugliness. You trim something (for example, your hair) by cutting it down in order to make it more shapely; of course, if you keep on cutting, you reach a crucial point at which your trimming, instead of adding to beauty, begins to subtract from it. This is the point at which trimming becomes untrimming; and untrimming, if kept up for a long enough time, would eventually be fatal.

This ultimate untrimming is what happens to all beautiful things, fragile and powerless as they are to make defense against Time's scythe and crooked knife.

We may now see how the first eight lines of this sonnet have been neatly blocked out: First the question, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" Then the statement that the beloved surpasses a summer's day both in greater—that is, more durable—loveliness and in greater temperateness. Then a series of alternating illustrations, first of summer's lesser temperateness, then of summer's less durable beauty.

It is the idea of durability that now engages Shakespeare's entire attention. The last six lines are all devoted to showing how the beloved's beauty is more permanent than that of summer.

The explanation of *why* the beloved is less subject to mortality is not, however, immediately revealed. Shakespeare first asserts, three consecutive times, the *fact* of immortality, without explaining how it will be achieved:

1. But thy eternal summer shall not fade
2. Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
3. Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade

Note that none of these three statements is an unequivocal declaration that the beloved will actually enjoy immortality. Number 1 does not say that the beloved as a person will live forever, but rather that the beloved's summer or beauty will not fade. Number 2 also treats beauty, not as an integral part of the beloved, but as something separate which can be owned or possessed. And number 3 does not assert that the beloved won't *be* down there wandering in Death's shade: it only states that Death won't be bragging about it.

The qualifications lurking in the three statements hint at something special about the beloved's immunity to the full effects of mortality, and this special something is clarified in line 12, where we learn that the beloved's beauty will be eternal because it will endure in poetry.

This is a rather limited brand of eternity: in fact the last two lines make clear that it is not, strictly, an eternity at all:

> So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

There is a classical and a Renaissance flavor in this assertion that the beloved will live a long time in art, yet only as long as the human race survives—which is not quite the same thing as forever.

Furthermore, we all know that the immortality of the particular person to whom this sonnet was actually addressed has in fact been considerably qualified during the last three and two-thirds centuries. This beloved may well live on in Shakespeare's verse, but scholars have not been able to agree about just who the beloved was—and most of us couldn't care less. For we do know Shakespeare's poem, his work of art, and this is what matters to *us*. I have a hunch it was what mattered to Shakespeare,

too. For that final couplet does not really celebrate the beloved nearly as much as it celebrates itself: and I much enjoy the superb air of gracious condescension in those closing words, "So long lives THIS—and THIS gives life to thee."

I have tried to show that the key to this poem's rhetorical structure is that second line which introduces the sonnet's two central ideas: temperateness and permanence. And the more I brood on this poem the more I am struck by the intimate relationship between—perhaps even identity of—these two ideas. Shakespeare has come very close to making the phrase "more temperate" mean "less subject to mortality"; that is, his word "temperate" is almost a synonym for "eternal."

In line 7 Shakespeare says that every beautiful thing is eventually shorn of its beauty either by accident or because of the essential instability of nature. The wording here, "by nature's changing course untrimm'd," offers a fascinating example of Shakespeare's firm control over the irrepressible ambivalence of language.

Many critics—and footnoters—contend that there is, in this line, a nautical metaphor: something to do with sailing a ship. Is there? Does a nautical metaphor make sense here?

Two possible meanings of the verb *to trim* pertain to the operations of a sailing vessel: to trim a ship can mean, first, to adjust it to a certain position in the water by judicious placing of cargo and ballast or, second, to arrange the ship in proper order for sailing—for instance, to trim the sails for a voyage. These trimming activities are conscious and careful manipulations related to a specific purpose: a voyage from one definite place to another, according to a prescribed course. But nature may suddenly heave up a storm which will change the ship's course, and when this happens the ship is "by nature's changing course untrimm'd." In like manner, all beautiful things may, at any time—and will surely, sooner or later—be untrimmed by nature's restless habit of changing course.

Does this nautical metaphor work? Yes. In fact if you read this line with the nautical metaphor in mind, you discover that it further tightens the link which unites the idea of unsteadiness or intemperateness and the idea of mortality, or death.

Frankly, I find this extremely close identification intellectually troublesome. It is perfectly easy for me to make a clear and logical distinction between two phenomena, one of them steady and calm, exhibiting little vacillation or agitation of any sort, yet fragile and short-lived; the other shaking with violent agitation, yet enduring for a very long time. I find it difficult to regard the meaning of "temperate" as necessarily involved with the meaning of "eternal."

For if to be "temperate" means to be free of mortality, then all men are, by definition, intemperate—not just the stormy Hotspurs, the dissolute Falstaffs, and the volatile Hamlets, but everybody . . . even the cool, cooperative Horatios.

But to someone like Queen Elizabeth or Sir Walter Raleigh the idea of defining "intemperate" as "mortal," or "temperate" as "eternal," would make a kind of sense. In the late sixteenth or early seventeeth century it would not be implausible to say that whereas men are "intemperate" by definition, angels are "temperate"; or that before the Fall, Adam was in essence "temperate," but after eating the apple his essential nature became "intemperate," and for this reason all of us are born "intemperate" whether we like it or not.

For a state of steadiness, or serenity, or a harmonious golden mean between extremes of any kind was commonly associated throughout the Middle Ages with permanence or eternity, whereas vacillation, discord, or turbulence was normally associated with mortality.

From the time of Aristotle, for example, scientists had postulated two kinds of substance:

First, there was ordinary physical matter, of which our bodies

and the immediate world around us were made. This matter consisted of the four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—combined in various ways. Because these elements were by nature antagonistic to one another, the order imposed on them by the act of creation—when they were transformed from seething and quarreling chaos into coherent form—was only a temporary order. Nor did these four ingredients ever achieve a state of perfect harmony. This kind of matter was therefore a heterogeneous substance, basically unstable, because composed of battling elements, and therefore corruptible and subject to decay, or mortal. This mutable, mortal, heterogeneous kind of matter was experienced by the physical senses.

The other kind of substance was usually called a fifth essence, or quintessence. It was conceived to be a single, homogeneous substance which could not be experienced by the physical senses, which was utterly free of all internal hostilities and was therefore not corruptible, but eternal. This quintessence, or eternal substance, was commonly accepted throughout the Middle Ages as the substance of angels' bodies and of the celestial spheres.

The rudimentary distinction between two disparate substances is alien, however, to the modern scientific mind. I have no formal knowledge of contemporary science, yet as a layman breathing the academic air of the twentieth century I somehow knew what the response would be when I recently went to the chemistry lab and asked a colleague three blunt questions:

1. Are some substances more stable than others?
2. Are some substances more permanent than others?
3. If so, is there any relationship between stability and permanence?

My colleague's reaction, as a twentieth-century scientist, was exactly what I expected: "These questions," he gently replied, "are, I fear, meaningless. It all depends on what you're talking about."

Of course I didn't know what I was talking about. When

I used the word "substance," for example, did I mean a compound? an element within the compound? a molecule within the element? an atom within the molecule? a proton within the atom? or what? As my colleague politely queried, at what level was I asking these questions? at a molecular level? an atomic level? or a subatomic level?

(The level really made little difference. I was simply in the wrong building at the wrong end of the campus.)

Yet, as far as I can tell from the scraps of things I hear—or overhear—about contemporary theories of matter, it no longer makes any sense to distinguish between mortal and eternal substances, because all matter is now regarded as susceptible to change. I hear that all matter nowadays consists of mass and energy, that there is a fixed and indestructible amount of mass and energy, and that mass and energy are interchangeable. Mass may be changed into energy and energy into mass; and such changes, instead of being deplored as deterioration leading to some sort of oblivion, are calmly accepted as a central fact of life.

What has happened since the early seventeenth century is that science and theology have split into separate modes of thought: the distinction between things mortal and things eternal has ceased to be a concern of science; it is exclusively a concern of theology.

In Shakespeare's day, flux and change were associated with some kind of disintegration either into nothing or into chaos, whereas stability was associated with permanence and order. Today, flux and change are apparently regarded as themselves eternal. In Shakespeare's time a fellow would normally say, "Some substances are unstable and therefore deteriorate." In our time it would be more accurate to say, "Everything is unstable; flux is simply the basic fact of all life."

The most novel feature of Sonnet 18, however, is not the idea—the identification of stability and eternity—but Shakespeare's

surprising use of that word *temperate*. To an Elizabethan reader, Shakespeare's rather odd use of the word would be plausible, yet striking. It would seem both intellectually daring and somehow right, as words ought to seem when used by a good poet.

What is the source of Shakespeare's rare use of *temperate* as though it meant "not subject to mortality"?

Well, it is fun to imagine that once he had finished writing that second line, "Thou art more lovely and more temperate," Shakespeare looked at this word *temperate* and saw there the Latin *tempus*, or time, and realized that in-temperate things are in-tempus, or within time, as distinct from eternal things, which are outside of time.

When this idea first occurred to me, I dashed to the Oxford English Dictionary to see if *temperate* really is derived from *tempus*, or time. No, I found, it is not. It is derived from *temperatus*, past participle of the verb *temperare*, to control, regulate, or mix in due proportions. When I discovered that the grandfather of *temperate* was not *tempus*, I concluded that Shakespeare had merely been engaged in semantic doodling and had not been—as I had fondly hoped—seeing deep into the history of our language.

Before abandoning this amateur etymological project, however, I looked around a bit more. I prowled, for instance, through all the indexes of *Notes and Queries*, from 1849 to the present. Among the millions of crochety little articles which have been printed in this ragbag of a publication, I found nothing on the etymological origins of the word *temperate*. I did find a few other treasures—including several tidbits listed under "Temperature, of the Weather at the Birth of Our Saviour"—but you already know about these.

I also went to the standard etymological encyclopaedias, by Messrs. Skeat and Partridge; and there I learned that the Latin verb *temperare* had in fact once been distantly related to the concept of time, in that originally it meant not just controlling or regu-

lating in general but, more specifically, controlling things in the sense of getting them done at the right time or at, say, the proper season.

So I looked to see if by any chance the words *temperare*, the immediate ancestor of *temperate*, and *tempus*, or time, might have a common ancestor. And the etymologists informed me that, sure enough, both words are probably derived from an Indo-European root, *tem* or *ten*. This rudimentary syllable meant to cut or to divide by cutting.

Thus, for instance, by derivation, a templum, or temple, represented a space cut off from other areas; a template was—and is—a pattern or form used in cutting out wood or metal; tempus, or time, represented something cut off from eternity and cut up into appropriate units such as seasons, hours, and minutes. The Latin verb *temperare* originally indicated a process of dividing, or apportioning—or "tempering"—by dividing up in a judicious way.

The semantic history of the English verb *to temper* reveals that it has always been associated with activities which promote some sort of desirable state, usually a state of orderliness, equanimity, or harmony. You may temper steel or glass—that is, bring it to a desired consistency—by gradual heating and cooling, just as you may temper artists' colors by mixing them with oil. You may temper modeling clay by wetting and kneading with the fingers; you may temper someone's rage or passion by . . . well, sometimes here too a little wetting and kneading may help. In music to temper is to adjust the pitch, to put in tune. All of these procedures lead to a desired condition, and all are in some way associated with harmony.

To temper a ship would mean to get it ready, to get it in order, to harmonize its many parts for a voyage: that is, to put it in good trim.

The noun *temper* has referred either to a condition of having been tempered or harmonized, as when you refer to the temper of

steel, or else to a state of mind. To lose your temper is to lose your equanimity or poise and may indicate that you have a *bad* temper, or an imperfectly developed inner harmony. The semantic core of all possible variations on the word *temper* is the suggestion of some just or equable division in the interest of some mode of harmony. This is neatly exhibited in the title of Johann Sebastian Bach's collection of musical composition: *Das Wohltemperierte Clavier, The Well-tempered Clavier*. This work was inspired by a late seventeenth-century musical innovation: the use of "equal temperament" for keyboard instruments, a system whereby the scale for the first time was divided into twelve equal half-tones.

In the Renaissance, the ethical ideal of Temperance was intimately related to the idea of harmony. Book II of Spenser's *Fairie Queene* is devoted to Temperance, a virtue which, for Spenser and his contemporaries, was radically different from abstinence, or ascetic denial. Temperance required a dynamic state of psychological and moral harmony, realized not just when the physical senses and the passions are vividly enjoyed but when this enjoyment is ordered and controlled by the soul, or reason. When spiritual or rational control of the senses is *not* exercised, a man loses his humanity and becomes a beast.

Incidentally, my exploration in *Notes and Queries* unearthed the interesting fact that the word *temperance* was not used to mean "abstinence from intoxicating liquor" until early in the nineteeth century. This very recent distortion of the word's traditional meaning began in America and dates from the 1820's. In this decade was founded the Young People's Temperance Society of Hector, New York. Its youthful members took a pledge of alcoholic abstinence.

The earlier, Spenserian meaning of *temperance* had long before been institutionalized in another society, this one formed on Christmas Day of the year 1600—about the time Shakespeare was composing Sonnet 18. The society was founded in Germany in the

Landgrave of Hesse, and it was called "The Order of Temperance." Its members also took a pledge, not the modern American pledge of abstinence, but a European, Renaissance pledge, designed to enforce the rational control of the lower faculties. On Christmas Day in 1600 these Germans solemnly vowed not to drink more than seven glasses of liquor at a time, and that not oftener than twice a day.

You may be interested to know, incidentally, that there really is a Hector, New York, and that I have unearthed the following three facts about this town:

Fact No. 1: Hector is nowhere near Troy.

Fact No. 2: The members of the so-called temperance society founded here in the nineteenth century could take either of two pledges: one, a pledge of abstinence from distilled spirits; the other, a pledge of what was called "total abstinence." In recording the attitude of the members, the secretary placed a "T" before the name of those who signed the more extreme pledge, and these came to be known as "T-Totalers."

Fact No. 3: In the last hundred years or so the population of this town has dwindled to practically nothing.

Milton, a full-fledged Renaissance Puritan, conceived of Temperance in exactly the same way as Spenser and the Elizabethans. Milton, like his medieval Christian predecessors, realized that temperance is linked with immortality because it is brought about by the soul, or reason: that part of man which, like the heavenly spheres, is not composed of the four elements and is therefore incorruptible and eternal.

When Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* entertain their angelic guest, Raphael, they sit down to converse before eating, even though Eve has the meal all prepared. As Milton puts it,

> A while discourse they held:
> No fear lest dinner cool.

Why no fear lest dinner cool? This is probably not an essentially doctrinal line: Milton is simply noting that Adam and Eve ate fruit, which required no cooking, and he may also be making a crack at the fashionable Restoration hostesses who fussed over their meals. But there is still another explanation of Eve's freedom from fear lest dinner cool: this dinner party takes place in eternity, before the Fall, when man is still immortal, when time has not yet begun and therefore cannot yet be either *cut off* from eternity or *cut up* into hours and seasons, and when vacillation is still an unknown phenomenon. The air is calm in the Garden of Eden; no rough winds arise to shake the darling buds, and every fair thing retains its trimness in nature's unchanging course. Furthermore, there is no such thing in Paradise as temperature, no vacillation—in fact, no distinction—between hot and cold. Hence "no fear lest dinner cool."

Furthermore, in the Garden of Eden before the Fall we witness perfect temperance. For although Adam and Eve delight in pleasures of the flesh, their senses remain under rational control, and their relationship is, in every way, a model of harmony.

All this changes after the Fall, when God gives commands, time begins, and Nature sets in motion her changing course. As Milton describes it,

> The sun
> Had first his precept so to move, so shine,
> As might affect the Earth with cold and heat
> Scarce tolerable . . .

At the same time the winds are promptly placed in the four quarters of the sky and are given firm instructions

> when with bluster to confound
> Sea, Air, and Shore, the Thunder when to roll
> With terror through the dark Aereal Hall.

That is to say, rough winds now begin to shake the darling buds of May, and sometimes now the eye of heaven begins to shine too hot as Summer drives out Spring, only to sign, in turn, an incontestible lease of all too short a date. Time has begun; and now it will be necessary for our Saviour not only to be born but to be born at a certain season and on a particular day or night, when the temperature of Bethlehem, in degrees Farenheit, may be measured because it is subject to change. Now it will be possible—indeed necessary—for fathers to say to their sons, "The surest thing you know . . . ain't."

When God explains to the Son what is happening, He says that Adam and Eve are being driven from Paradise as a punishment for Sin. Milton's language here is of special interest. For it was Sin, Milton writes,

> that first
> Dis-temper'd all things, and of incorrupt
> Corrupted.

As I remarked earlier, in the seventeeth century it would not have been implausible to say that Adam was originally "temperate," but since the Fall we have all been born "intemperate," whether we like it or not. To a seventeeth-century reader Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 would therefore suggest a tribute to three qualities in the beloved: (1) great beauty, (2) beauty that will survive long into the future, and (3) moral innocence, or purity, because this person is associated with the pure and temperate clime of Paradise.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
  So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
  So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

Matthew Arnold, you remember, asserted that Shakespeare, like a lofty hill, made the "Heaven of Heavens his dwelling-place" and spared "but the cloudy border of his base/to the foil'd searching of mortality."

In examining this little poem I have been, I admit, one more of these mortal searchers, exploring only the cloudy border of Shakespeare's base. But I will *not* admit that my searching has been foiled. For to be foiled is to be frustrated, whereas my searchings have been illuminating and full of fun. While indulging in the pedagogical urge to show Matthew Arnold and my honors student how Shakespeare reeks of the Renaissance, I have learned a lot about this sonnet that I never knew before.

There is one other thing about this sonnet, by the way, that I have neglected to mention: namely, that it is, when stripped of my gross analytical apparatus, very beautiful.

Indeed it *should* be stripped of this apparatus: for we have

discovered that "temperate" means "harmonious and therefore enduring." And since beauty is the outward expression of an inner harmony, to say that something is "more lovely" is automatically to say that it is "more temperate." In short, my distinctions must disappear because "temperate" and "lovely" mean the same thing.

As a work of art, Sonnet 18 is clear, precise, perfectly controlled, harmonious. For this reason it has already lived more than three hundred and fifty years, and I am sure that it will go on living for as long as men can breathe or eyes can see—however long (or short) that may be.

In other words, because it is harmonious, and because it is enjoying a remarkable approach to immortality, this sonnet is itself a splendid illustration of Shakespeare's temperance.

The Game of Love and Marriage

Alan Downer

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Alan Downer

Every lecture begins with a premise, but mine is so ancient and so durable that it requires only the briefest explanation. All the world's a stage, said Jaques in *As You Like It*, or to put it another way the stage is a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm that surrounds it. This is not to say that the stage at its best is realistic, reproducing in exact detail the world of daily experience. Rather, the stage at its best reflects the *idea* of the great world: the meaning of daily experience is revealed by playwright and player for playgoer. Idea and meaning determine what actions the stage will display, what characters will be chosen to display them, and the fates of those characters. To avoid dealing in generalities I propose to consider how one common and widely shared human experience—the pursuit of matrimony—has served and been served by four English playwrights over the centuries. I propose further to confine myself to comedy, partly because the comic mode tends to be slighted in the classroom. Tragedy, like an abdominal operation, seems to provoke ready and endless discussion; we are so delighted to laugh at the funny thing that happened on the way to the Forum that no other response seems to be necessary. I should add that, in taking comedy seriously, I hope I am not taking the fun out of life. In these times—indeed in *any* times—laughter is too precious to be tampered with.

> Laughter is surely
> The surest touch of genius in creation.
> Would *you* ever have thought of it, I ask you,
> If you had been making man, stuffing him full
> Of such hopping greeds and passions that he has
> To blow himself to pieces as often as he
> Conveniently can manage it—would it also
> Have occurred to you to make him burst himself
> With such a phenomenon as cachination?
> That same laughter, madam, is an irrelevancy
> Which almost amounts to revelation.[1]

[1] Christopher Fry, *The Lady's Not for Burning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), copyright © 1949, 1950 by Christopher Fry.

The laughter that is the response to the theatrical game of love and marriage is not irrelevent, but it can amount to a revelation, all the same.

The problem with the subject is where to begin. If you look around you, at the contemporary theater, at the movies, at TV situation comedies, you will be hard put to it to find a play in which winning and wooing does not form a major (if not the dominant) part of the action. And this is but a reflection of the condition of the comic repertory in the post-classical world: if you put your hand anywhere into the comic pudding you will come up with fingers full of romantic love chases, generally with a priest in view. For the end of the chase is the institution of marriage, not conquest but coexistence. The recurrent subject of the comic theater is the game of love *and* marriage.

You will notice that I specified the post-classical theater. The dramatic actions that have survived from golden Greece and brassy Rome generally avoid wooing and winning; I do not recall from that repertory anything that we would categorize as a love scene. On the Greek hand, Aristophanes is too busy needling his rivals and debunking the power structure to find young love an intriguing subject. On the Roman hand, Plautus and Terence sometimes build their plots on the woes of a lovelorn youth, but they are more interested (and presumably their audience was too) in how the young man and his clever servant outwit a combine of churlish parents; the virgo in question is generally kept off stage. In the Roman world apparently marriage was the result of, and less important than, finding a constant source of unearned increment.

But the world that emerged from the Dark Ages, the world of medieval Christianity, professed to take a very different view of what was important in human experience. Every action of man, every condition of society, every principle of statecraft was interpreted and evaluated in terms of how closely it complied with the ideal institution that St. Augustine called the City of God. The

City is, of course, a metaphor, but for the medieval Christian the metaphorical world was the ultimate reality: the world that surrounded him was an insubstantial pageant, a baseless fabric, "no more yielding but a dream."

Christ had given his disciples not only a creed but a way of explaining that creed to the gentiles. As a teacher he was most effective when he spoke in parables, and his disciples were quick to learn his pedagogical method. God, said Paul, "hath made us able ministers of the new testament: not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (2 Cor. 3:6) So the Fathers of the Church embarked on a centuries' long quest to discover the spirit for which the letter was but a mask. As a result of this quest, they discovered (for instance) that Noah's flood was not the act of a vengeful god flushing sinful man down the drain, but a figurative anticipation of the sacrament of baptism, the revelation by a merciful god that man might attain forgiveness by washing away sin, not the sinner. They discovered that the story of Abraham and Isaac was not a suspense drama of a duty-bound father and a pious son, but a revelation by God that he would himself ultimately provide the lamb to be sacrificed for mankind. They learned (and this must be my final example, for they are endless) that the Song of Solomon was not—as the letter spelled out—a mildly pornographic love song, but—as the spirit revealed—an allegory of the relationship of Christ, the divine bridegroom, and his heavenly bride, the Church. Although it was first applied to sacred scripture, this search for the spirit within the letter was extended to secular matters: to the reinterpretation of classical writers (in particular, Vergil and Ovid) and to the allegorizing of history; finally it became an instrument for the creative writer, for men like Chaucer, Gower, and William Langland.

I am sure that some of you must have encountered the early attempts of playwrights to interpret biblical adventures for new audiences in terms of this allegorical way of looking at history. The most famous is the *Second Shepherd's Play*, a medieval farce

which equates a comic incident of the mercy shown to a sheep stealer with the nativity of Christ; less frequently anthologized, but more pertinent to my subject, is *Noah's Flood*, in which the playwright develops at some length the character of Noah's wife (who is not even named in the Bible) into a shrewish gossip, who wilfully disobeys her lord and master (thus typifying the state of society) and has to be beaten into submission (that is, the little world of the family has to be put into good order) before the Ark can set forth on its mission.

As we look back upon the Middle Ages, as we read accounts of the self-perpetuating feuds of the feudal lords, the bloody crusades, the devastating plagues, the barbarous dungeons and torture wheels—or as we travel through the remains of the period today and see the walled communities huddling in desperation around a hilltop castle—our vision is of an age of insecurity, of turbulence, of chaos. But whatever the facts of life of the time (the letter, so to speak), the eyes of the people were supposed to be focused on the Idea (the spirit) of living: an orderly world established by divine ordinance where every element in the heavens, in the state, in the family, and in nature had its appointed place and function—husband/wife/older son/younger son/daughter/servant/ /king/nobles/gentry/merchant/artisan/peasant/—a series of social contracts drawn up to order man's life after Adam departed from the Garden of Eden and his descendants discovered the delightful possibility of evil and chaos. Fortunately for the theater, the Tempter accompanied Adam and Eve out of the Garden and was indefatigable in suggesting new ways to lay siege to the City of God, the divinely ordained social contract. He could call on one or another of the seven deadly sins to put some spice into the dullness of regularity; there were the ten commandments to break, one by one or two at a time. I say this was fortunate for the theater, for of course there are few possibilities for drama in the orderly Great Society. Like Satan, the drama thrives on disorder and the seven deadly sins. *Unlike* Satan, however, the drama that grew out of the world of medieval Christianity was concerned not

just with chaos and disorder but with the efforts of men and women to bring order out of chaos, to restore the social contract decreed by God.

That is why Renaissance tragedy (with few exceptions) does not end, as in Greece, with the death of the hero but goes beyond death to the arrival or the election of the force (Fortinbras, Malcolm) that will restore order to the world the hero has disrupted. That is why the chronicle history play was so popular with Elizabethans: not because it exploited a patriotic interest in English history, but because it so clearly demonstrated that good order would win out in the end, confirming not just the Englishman's faith in England's glory, but the Christian's faith in the grace of God. And that is why the game of love and marriage—an experience shared commonly by the highest and lowest in the audience—came to be the commonest of subjects for popular drama.

Shakespeare's *Henry V* is the culmination of a great series of history plays dealing almost exclusively with a man's world of politics and the battlefield. But after English Henry has defeated temptation at home, dissension among his nobles, and his French enemies with ringing rhetoric and manly valor, he ends his trilogy with a charming and apparently anticlimactic wooing scene: he persuades the daughter of his defeated enemy to become his queen. This could be (and perhaps was, historically) good international political strategy, but dramatically it is an allegorical restatement, in the most understandable terms, of the meaning of Henry's political life: he does not woo the Princess to destroy her but to establish the possibility of a fruitful future life; so, he did not fight the French to destroy them but to establish a relationship in which God's purposes for man could be fulfilled. But I said my subject was comedy, and *Henry V* does not really qualify for that genre.

During the period in his career when the comic mode was most attractive to him, Shakespeare discovered a basic plot which permitted him to create with luxuriant ease the kind of romantic tangles to which his audience would respond, without departing from his

continuing concern with the re
With many variations, the basi
acters go from a world that has
into a magic wood or a nonex
happen: a king of fairies sorts o
a tongue-tied lover finds his to
grows to lovely womanhood.
strengthened by their experience,
their responsibilities. Such is t
of Verona, *A Midsummer Nig*
later—*The Winter's Tale* and *T*
version is in *As You Like It*, w
(Polonius-like) a pastoral-con
is what distinguishes *As You Li*
Greek and Roman romances of

As You Like It contrasts
political world of Duke Frede
banished Duke in the Forest of
characterized, on the political l
the usurping Duke and, on the
ment of his younger brother. As
the younger brother Orlando m
life—with the Duke's wrestler
the cracking of ribs is "sport
court), is provoked by maltreatr
(a breach of the divinely ord
speak any word of love whe
opportunity.

The "golden world" of t
place to the Elizabethan specta
of myth or pastoral. The weat
casts as is the hungry lioness w
shepherds have other sorrows t
unyielding shepherdesses. Yet t

stablishment of the social contract.
c plot goes like this: selected char-
uddenly become unfriendly, chaotic,
stent state where impossible things
t a quartet of mismatched teenagers,
ngue, a supposedly abandoned child
But in the end these characters,
return to the real world to take up
he basic fabric of *Two Gentlemen*
ht's Dream, *Twelfth Night* and—
he Tempest. But perhaps the purest
hich Professor Kittredge once called
ical-*actual* drama. The last term
ke It from its classical ancestors, the
Longus, Heliodorus, and Apuleius.
two worlds, or ways of life: the
rick and the golden world of the
Arden. The world of the court is
evel, by the tyrannical behavior of
domestic level, by Oliver's mistreat-
the chief victim of this dual tyranny,
ust fight for his livelihood—and his
(it is not without significance that
for ladies" in the opinion of this
ent into throttling his elder brother
ined hierarchy), and is unable to
Rosalind presents him with the

he Forest of Arden was a familiar
tor, though it is not the fairyland
er can be as unfriendly to the out-
ho nearly eliminates our hero; the
bear than the hopeless pursuit of
e cruelty of nature (which is, after

all, only natural) is quite different from the tyranny of man. In fleeing from Duke Frederick's court to the Forest of Arden, Rosalind and Orlando "go . . . to liberty and not to banishment," and from adversity they extract a precious jewel.

The principal action of *As You Like It* is the series of conversions that the Forest brings about. Most prominent, of course, is the conversion of Orlando from a speechless victim of Cupid into a properly voluble lover (involving, incidentally, the rescue of his cruel elder brother—an act of charity). But there are other conversions on other levels: Oliver, at court wholly the self-willed tyrant concerned with place and possessions, willingly surrenders place and possessions for the love of Celia and the pastoral life. Phebe, the proud and wilful shepherdess, learns to be content with her proper station and her true lover. Duke Frederick, seeking revenge, undergoes a religious conversion, repents his evil actions, and takes up a monastic existence.

These parallel actions constitute a kind of parable; they interpret the central motif which each repeats. In the largest dimension, the chaos which Duke Frederick's usurpation caused in the social-political sphere is dissipated and order is restored. Hatred, the chief emotion displayed in the opening scenes, is gradually replaced by love, and love is clearly related to the basic concept of the Christian ethos: the proper love of man and woman (demonstrated by Rosalind and Orlando) reflects the proper relationship between the governor and the governed, which reflects that charity which should be the proper relationship of all men to each other under God's gracious decree. The play ends in marriage, and Shakespeare introduces into the ritual Hymen, the classical god who presided over the union of male and female, to explicate the significance of this comic romance:

> Then is there mirth in heaven
> When earthy things made even
> Atone together.

The key word is, of course, *atone*, which bears for us the dictionary

meaning of "making reparations" but for the Elizabethans bore also its root meaning of being together in harmony, in oneness. *As You Like It* dramatizes the possibility of the realization of this concept of harmony, of good order, in human relations. And thus Shakespeare's use of the game of love and marriage reflects and confirms the doctrine of a morally ordered world promulgated more or less unchanged and unchallenged by the political, theological, and philosophical writers for nearly a millennium.

On January 30, 1649, the leaders of the Puritan revolution severed the head of King Charles I from his body. The act was literal enough, but it also had its spiritual implication—it signified the destruction of the political system stabilized by Henry VIII; it signified the rejection of the hierarchical society justified by the moral principles promulgated by the Church Fathers; and it put an end to the usefulness of dramatic actions confirming the right reason of such moral principles. But the love chase continued, in life and on the boards, for the institution of marriage was still the best parable for the larger social contract, though in the Restoration (the period which endeavored to bring order out of the chaos of the Puritan Commonwealth) the terms of the contract had to be discovered anew.

The Restoration (roughly 1660-1700) was an age of experiment. The English court, which had been uprooted by Cromwell's revolutionary enterprise, returned to England as to a *brave new world*—the nobility were really foreigners in their former homeland. During the Commonwealth, the followers of the monarchy (abroad and at home) lived in idleness, on intrigue, in the most artificial worlds of romance (they read the endless tales of love and adventure of the French romancers) and in the harshest worlds of threadbare reality (they had no money). London did not become a temple of peace for the restored king; it was rather a theater full of unexpected and unannounced reversals. Having shifted overnight from monarchy to republicanism and again to monarchy, the city and citizens maintained their pendular existence. The Whigs and Tories

were born, and born to turbulence; the city swayed between protestantism and catholicism, now following the Quakers like the rats of Hamlin, now falling upon them like the Puritans of Boston.

In the midst of this turbulent state and turbulent city stood Whitehall—the royal housing development, the epitome of turbulence. Here lived the king and all the members of the royal family, guests, associates, servants. Here were the offices of state, chapels, banqueting rooms, galleries, inner rooms, and secret passages. This was a theater specially fitted for the play of intrigue: religious, political, amorous. In Whitehall and its environs the society of the Restoration court lived as in a world of its own. The returned cavalier, now that he had money, *affected* to despise it: for the getting and multiplying of money, he substituted sex. This was a natural, perhaps the *only*, substitute, for this was a world whose values were determined, not by the church, but by women. Men collected mistresses, and women collected "reputations"—i.e., *bad* reputations. The amorous intrigues which constitute the average man's total picture of the Restoration are, in fact, a small mirror of the whirling world of court, city, state. A world, as the dramatist would call it, of turn and counterturn, of alternating circumstance. There were no rules for behavior in the court; they had to be found, and the courtiers were eager experimenters. King Charles had to experiment, to create standards, values, principles. Not without significance, he was an enthusiastic supporter of the Royal Society, founded for the objective investigation of *natural law*. As the scientist experimented with nature, so the politician experimented with society, so the courtier experimented with human relations. Restoration comedy is a record of these experiments.

Just as Shakespeare had found a basic pattern of dramatic action to conform to the world view inherited from the Middle Ages, the great Restoration comic writers quickly evolved a skeletal plot which would serve to reflect a society in search of conventions, in search of a contract which would respect the rights of the individual man while stabilizing and dignifying his society. The central

characters in the action are (1) a young man who has recklessly experimented with the opposite sex and who is desperately in love with (2) a young lady who, though pursued by many lovers, rejects the conventional marriage—typified by (3) other characters in the plot—marriage based on money or some other material consideration and leading inevitably to hypocrisy, adultery, debasement of the individual. For three or four acts the young lovers shadowbox, as the lady tests her wooer's fidelity, sincerity, stamina; then in a long and climactic scene the lovers confront one another in an isolated spot and establish the terms on which a proper marriage can be established. This has come to be known as the proviso scene, and, though the terms of the contract are often trivial or ludicrous, the seriousness of their collective import is not to be questioned. The proviso scenes are epitomes of human relationships in the Restoration macrocosm.

The most famous of Restoration comedies is (and note the title) *The Way of the World*, written by William Congreve at the very end of the period. The plot is too complex to be related, though its essence is the basic pattern I have just described. The pursuer is Mirabell, who has had some sort of love relationship with every woman in the cast; his objective is Millamant, who is sought after by—and has avoided—every man in her world. The fourth act is a masterpiece of comic construction, beginning with a graphic digest of everything that is ugliest in conventional human relationships and culminating in the most persuasive of proviso scenes.

We first meet Lady Wishfort, the guardian of Millamant's glorious person and considerable fortune. Lady Wishfort is old but will not face that fact; she is ugly and raddled, but she covers her face with so much paint that it is apt to crack if she permits herself a natural grimace; she pretends to be concerned for her ward's happiness, but she is really interested in retaining control over her money. As the act begins she is planning how she will receive Sir Rowland, on whom she has amorous designs (she does not know that he is Mirabell's servant in disguise):

> Well, and how shall I receive him? In what Figure shall I give his Heart the first Impression? There is a great deal in the first Impression. Shall I sit?—No, I won't sit—I'll walk—ay I'll walk from the Door upon his Entrance: and then turn full upon him—No, that will be too sudden. I'll lye—ay, I'll lye down—I'll receive him in my little Dressing-Room, there's a Couch—Yes, yes, I'll give the first Impression on a Couch—I won't lye neither, but loll and lean upon one Elbow; with one Foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way—Yes—and then as soon as he appears, start, ay, start and be surpriz'd and rise to meet him in a pretty Disorder—Yes—O, nothing is more alluring than a Levee from a Couch in some Confusion—It shews the Foot to advantage, and furnishes with Blushes, and re-composing Airs beyond Comparison. Hark! There's a Coach.

In other words she is baiting a trap with temptations, hoping that her prey will not be able to see the truth. A fine promise of an honorable relationship.

She withdraws, leaving the stage to Millamant and a parade of suitors: Witwould, Petulant, Sir Wilful Witwould, each well gone in drink, and each dismissed by the clearsighted lady. Finally enter Mirabell.

> Do you lock your self up from me, to make my Search more curious? Or is this pretty Artifice contriv'd, to signifie that here the Chace must end, and my Pursuit be crown'd, for you can fly no further?—
>
> *Milla.* Vanity! No—I'll fly and be follow'd to the last Moment, tho' I am upon the very Verge of Matrimony, I expect you should sollicit me as much as if I were wavering at the Grate of a Monastery, with one Foot over the Threshold. I'll be sollicited to the very last, nay and afterwards.

Mira. What, after the last?

Milla. O, I should think I was poor and had nothing to bestow, if I were reduc'd to an inglorious Ease; and freed from the agreeable Fatigues of Sollicitation.

Mira. But do not you know, that when Favours are conferr'd upon instant and tedious Sollicitation, that they diminish in their Value, and that both the Giver loses the Grace, and the Receiver lessens his Pleasure?

Milla. It may be in Things of common Application; but never sure in Love. O, I hate a Lover, that can dare to think he draws a Moment's Air, independent on the Bounty of his Mistress. There is not so impudent a Thing in Nature, as the sawcy Look of an assured Man, confident of Success. The Pedantick Arrogance of a very Husband, has not so Pragmatical an Air. Ah! I'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my Will and Pleasure.

Mira. Would you have 'em both before Marriage? Or will you be contented with the first now, and stay for the other 'till after Grace?

Milla. Ah don't be impertinent—My dear Liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful Solitude, my darling Contemplation, must I bid you then Adieu? Ay-h adieu—My Morning Thoughts, agreeable Wakings, indolent Slumbers, all ye *douceurs*, ye *Someils du Matin*, adieu—I can't do't, 'tis more than impossible—Positively *Mirabell*, I'll lye a-bed in a Morning as long as I please.

Mira. Then I'll get up in a Morning as early as I please.

Milla. Ah! Idle Creature, get up when you will—And d'ye hear, I won't be call'd Names after I'm Marry'd; positively I won't be call'd Names.

Mira. Names!

Milla. Ay, as Wife, Spouse, my Dear, Joy, Jewel, Love, Sweet-heart, and the rest of that nauseous Cant,

in which Men and their Wives are so fulsomly familiar,—
I shall never bear that—Good *Mirabell* don't let us be
familiar or fond, nor kiss before Folks, like my Lady
Fadler and Sir *Francis;* Nor go to *Hide-Park* together the
first *Sunday* in a new Chariot, to provoke Eyes and
Whispers; And then never be seen there together again:
as if we were proud of one another the first Week, and
asham'd of one another ever after. Let us never Visit
together, nor go to a Play together, but let us be very
strange and well bred: Let us be as strange as if we had
been marry'd a great while; and as well bred as if we
were not marry'd at all.

Mira. Have you any more Conditions to offer? Hitherto your Demands are pretty reasonable.

Milla. Trifles,—As Liberty to pay and receive Visits
to and from whom I please; to write and receive Letters,
without Interrogatories or wry Faces on your part; to
wear what I please; and chuse Conversation with regard
only to my own Taste: to have no Obligation upon
me to converse with Wits that I don't like, because they
are your Acquaintance: or to be intimate with Fools,
because they may be your Relations. Come to Dinner
when I please dine in my Dressing-Room when I'm out
of Humour, without giving a Reason. To have my Closet
inviolate; to be sole Empress of my Tea-Table, which you
must never presume to approach without first asking leave.
And lastly wherever I am, you shall always knock at
the Door before you come in. These Articles subscrib'd, if
I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees
dwindle into a Wife.

Mira. Your Bill of Fare is something advanc'd in
this latter Account. Well, have I liberty to offer Condi-
tions—That when you are dwindled into a Wife, I may
not be beyond measure enlarg'd into a Husband.

Milla. You have free leave, propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

Mira. I thank you. *Inprimis* then, I covenant that your Acquaintance be general: that you admit no sworn Confident, or Intimate of your own Sex: no she Friend to skreen her Affairs under your Countenance, and tempt you to make Trial of a mutual Secresie. No Decoy-Duck to wheadle you a fop—*scrambling* to the Play in a Mask—Then bring you home in a pretended Fright, when you think you shall be found out—And rail at me for missing the Play, and disappointing the Frolick which you had to pick me up and prove my Constancy.

Milla. Detestable *Inprimis!* I go to the Play in a Mask!

Mira. Item, I Article, that you continue to like your own Face, as long as I shall: And while it passes currant with me, that you endeavour not to new Coin it. To which end, together with all Vizards for the Day, I prohibit all Masks for the Night, made of Oil'd-skins and I know not what—Hog's Bones, Hare's Gall, Pig Water, and the Marrow of a roasted Cat. In short, I forbid all Commerce with the Gentlewoman in *what-d'ye-call-it* Court. *Item,* I shut my Doors against all Bauds with Baskets, and penny-worths of *Muslin, China, Fans, Atlasses, &c.*—*Item,* when you shall be Breeding—

Milla. Ah! Name it not.

Mira. Which may be presum'd, with a Blessing on our Endeavours—

Milla. Odious Endeavours!

Mira. I denounce against all strait Lacing, squeezing for a Shape, 'till you mould my Boy's Head like a Sugar-loaf; and instead of a Man-Child, make me Father to a Crooked-billet. Lastly, to the Dominion of the *Tea-Table,* I submit.—But with *proviso,* that you exceed not in your

> Province: but restrain your self to native and simple *Tea-Table* Drinks, as *Tea*, *Chocolate*, and *Coffee*. As likewise to Genuine and Authoriz'd *Tea-Table* Talk—Such as mending of Fashions, spoiling Reputations, railing at absent Friends, and so forth—But that on no Account you encroach upon the Mens Prerogative, and presume to drink Healths, or toast Fellows: for prevention of which, I banish all *Foreign Forces*, all Auxiliaries to the *Tea-Table*, as *Orange-Brandy*, all *Anniseed*, *Cinamon*, *Citron* and *Barbado's-Waters*, together with *Ratafia* and the most noble Spirit of *Clary*.—But for *Couslip-Wine*, *Poppy-Water*, and all *Dormitives*, those I allow. These *Proviso's* admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying Husband.
>
> *Milla*. O horrid *Proviso's!* filthy strong Waters! I toast Fellows, Odious Men! I hate your odious *Proviso's*.

That is not the end of the act, or of the plot, but it is enough to demonstrate how the game of love and marriage has been adapted to the needs of the *brave new world*. With wit, good sense (even in trivial matters), self-respect, and respect for each other, Millamant and Mirabell arrive at the conditions for coexistence, while Lady Wishfort is caught in her own trap and joins the other characters in the fool's gallery of the Restoration world.

Both in history and in drama the Restoration was a brief period, and *The Way of the World* is the high point of its theater and the turning point of its audience—the audience, indeed, did not like the play very much, for by 1700 the audience was beginning to subscribe to a set of values that centered more on property rights than individual rights, on business ethics more than social philosophy. The middle class was beginning to take the place of the aristocracy as a social power, and the middle class was beginning to occupy more and more of the seats in the theater.

Once again, the love chase showed its durability: when the

public view of life changed, the comedy of pursuit and compromise was ready to adjust its sights and remain in public service. The fabric is the same, libidinous young man, wary young woman, obstructive old folks; the climax is the proviso scene that precedes marriage. But the characters are softened: the rakish hero has his private charities, the maiden is poor but honest, Lady Wishfort becomes Lady Bountiful. And in the proviso scene the appeal is not to reason but to sentiment.

Perhaps the best/worst example of the kind of play I am now talking about is *The West Indian*, written by Richard Cumberland in 1771. Its highly complex plot involves Belcour, a young West Indian rake, wealthy but orphaned, who comes to England and makes a play for Louisa Dudley, poor—as I said—but honest. He attempts a seduction and does not succeed, apparently for the first time in his career. This failure very properly opens his eyes, and he begs an interview.

> *Belcour.* Miss Dudley, I have solicited this audience to repeat to you my penitence and confusion: How shall I atone? What reparation can I make to you and virtue?
>
> *Louisa.* To me there's nothing due, nor any thing demanded of you but your more favourable opinion for the future, if you should chance to think of me: Upon the part of virtue I'm not empower'd to speak, but if hereafter, as you range thro' life, you shou'd surprize her in the person of some wretched female, poor as myself and not so well protected, enforce not your advantage, compleat not your licentious triumph, but raise her, rescue her from shame and sorrow, and reconcile her to herself again.
>
> *Belcour.* I will, I will; by bearing your idea ever present in my thoughts, virtue shall keep an advocate within me; but tell me, loveliest, when you pardon the offence, can you, all perfect as you are, approve of the

offender? As I now cease to view you in that false light I lately did, can you, and in the fulness of your bounty will you, cease also to reflect upon the libertine addresses I have paid you, and look upon me as your reform'd, your rational admirer?

Louisa. Are sudden reformations apt to last; and how can I be sure the first fair face you meet will not ensnare affections so unsteady, and that I shall not lose you lightly as I gain'd you?

Belcour. Because tho' you conquer'd me by surprize, I have no inclination to rebel: because since the first moment that I saw you, every instant has improv'd you in my eyes, because by principle as well as passion I am unalterably yours, in short there are ten thousand causes for my love to you, would to Heaven I could plant one in your soft bosom that might move you to return it!

Louisa. Nay, Mr. Belcour—

Belcour. I know I am not worthy your regard: I know I'm tainted with a thousand faults, sick of a thousand follies, but there's a healing virtue in your eyes that makes recovery certain: I cannot be a villain in your arms.

Louisa. That you can never be: whomever you shall honour with your choice, my life upon't that woman will be happy: it is not from suspicion that I hesitate, it is from honour; tis the severity of my condition, it is the world that never will interpret fairly in our case.

Belcour. Oh, what am I, and who in this wide world concerns himself for such a nameless, such a friendless thing as I am? I see, Miss Dudley, I've not yet obtain'd your pardon.

Louisa. Nay, that you are in full possession of.

Belcour. Oh, seal it with your hand then, loveliest

> of women, confirm it with your heart: make me honourably happy, and crown your penitent not with your pardon only, but your love.
>
> *Louisa.* My love!—
>
> *Belcour.* By Heav'n my soul is conquer'd with your virtues more than my eyes are ravish'd with your beauty: Oh, may this soft, this sensitive alarm be happy, be auspicious! Doubt not, deliberate not, delay not: If happiness be the end of life, why do we slip a moment?

You will note that Louisa's reluctance stems from a care for her "honor" (i.e., pride), a fear that people will think she has married for money; and the reasons Belcour advances for his reform are (to put it mildly) insubstantial. Somehow you feel that Millamant and Mirabell *will* live happily ever after, but a love like Belcour's and Louisa's will hardly last until the film is in the can. But it is a true mirror of an age in which—for the mass audience—sentiment had replaced reason. I might add that just as the scene I read you comes to an end Louisa's brother enters to announce that their grandfather's will has just been found, that he is his grandfather's heir, and that she will receive a fortune of £15,000. Another character observes that this is not a lucky chance, but the work of providence, "the justice of Heaven." The reward of virtue is not eternal life but £15,000 cash money: the act confirms the belief of what was now a nation of shopkeepers.

And, in a sense, beginning with the eighteenth century the theater itself became a shop, the playwright a small businessman, and the play a commodity. With a very few exceptions, for the next hundred-odd years authors devoted themselves to keeping the shelves stocked with ready-made goods, cut to the three or four standard patterns most in demand by the market, changing the body slightly now and then, like General Motors, but rarely tampering with the chassis. A thousand young men pursued a thousand young ladies, proved their worth, outwitted rivals or

stern parents, and were rewarded with a thousand chaste embraces as a thousand curtains fell. And audiences were content: indeed if a playwright altered the model too radically they stayed away in droves. Perhaps, in their chancy world of free enterprise, it was necessary to have some place to turn for reassurance that happiness—which was the end of life—could be attained.

It is one of the paradoxes of dramatic history that this medium which repeatedly presented itself as a mirror of the world could, on occasion, resolutely turn its back on the world and become a mirror only of itself. The nineteenth century was an age of revolution—political, industrial, scientific, philosophical: it is the century of Watts and Darwin, of Marx and Freud—but you would never know it from the offerings of the London theaters. Until, at the end of the century, some playwrights decided that the mirror needed to reflect a new image. Their characters continued to play the game of love and marriage, but now the pursuer (as in life) was frequently the young lady, and if marriage was her goal, it was not always the play's conclusion. There are so many delicious examples that it is difficult to choose one to end with: *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Trelawney of the Wells*, *The Playboy of the Western World*.

But the name that dominates the English stage from the nineties to the Second World War is Bernard Shaw: he turned to the love chase early in his career and used it over and over again as a vehicle for various causes, for Shaw was unashamedly a propagandist engaged, as he said, "in a persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals." And he shrewdly decided that the carrot which would lead the public unwittingly to *his* beliefs was the beloved formula which a Hollywood writer once described as Boy meets Girl, Boy loses Girl, Boy gets Girl. But as the public nibbled contently on the familiar carrot, it was quite likely to turn into spinach, an unexpected or hitherto rejected form of nourishment.

For example everybody knew the story of Pygmalion and

Galatea, of a sculptor who cr[illegible]eated a female statue so perfect that he fell in love with his own [illegible]handiwork. So intense was his love that Venus endowed the statu[illegible] with life; sculptor and statue were married and lived happily ever [illegible]after (in Ovid, that is). But Shaw not only knew the literary class[illegible]ics; he knew the literature of science. And, as he took the liberty [illegible]of rewriting familiar stories (Caesar and Cleopatra) to make his [illegible]points, he also took the liberty of accepting and rejecting scientifi[illegible]c evidence. For example, evolution: he rejected Darwinian evolutio[illegible]n as resolutely as did William Jennings Bryan. The idea that su[illegible]rvival and development of a species, "progress," must be at the m[illegible]ercy of whim or accident was repugnant to him. Instead he el[illegible]ected to espouse the idea of creative evolution propounded by Lam[illegible]arck, a theory completely exploded by the discoveries of Darwin b[illegible]ut attractive as a metaphor to Shaw because of its insistence on th[illegible]e potential of the individual will. In Lamarckian biology a species[illegible] survives and develops because of the impulse to improve itself: to c[illegible]hoose an absurd example, the giraffe developed a long neck to reac[illegible]h the food it most desired. Shaw translated creative evolution in[illegible]to a revolutionary's watchword, not survival of the fittest, but surv[illegible]ival of those who *will to be* fit.

Creative evolution thus [illegible]becomes the chief metaphor in the Shavian dramatic action. His[illegible] most important plays are about those heroes and heroines wh[illegible]o pull up their roots, who move ahead, that the race may foll[illegible]ow. The will that drives them is not always their own, for they [illegible]are in the grip of a mysterious power that Shaw calls the Life Force. [illegible] Simpler men might call it God or Fate, but the Shavian phrase [illegible]emphasizes his concern with life rather than death, with action [illegible]rather than apathy. The metaphor is the heart of *Pygmalion*, a su[illegible]nny parable of creative evolution.

The title recalls at once t[illegible]he familiar myth, but the important thing is not the way the pla[illegible]y reproduces the myth but how it departs from it. Shaw's Gal[illegible]atea is not brought to life to be sacrificed at the marriage altar. [illegible] Rather, his Galatea is metaphorically brought to life: in this era of *My Fair Lady* it is hardly necessary

to do more than remind you that the plot is the education of Eliza Doolittle: she is taught to accept her responsibility as a human being. The life force that drives her is Henry Higgins. "What is life," he cries, "but a series of inspired follies? The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day." Under his driving, impatient patience, Eliza grows her long neck.

Eliza begins as a stereotype, one of the flower girls of Tottenham Court Road. By the end of the third act, she has been sufficiently educated to pass for a duchess, but this is only to exchange one stereotype for another. She has moved from the institution represented by Tottenham Court Road to that represented by the at home, the reception. For a moment she is a lost soul: out of her own world to which she knows she cannot return, caught in a new world where she can have no place, since Higgins is not the marrying kind. But evolution, once started, continues—the Life Force is not to be denied. In the final scene Galatea frees herself even from Pygmalion and stands on her feet as an individual, responsible to and for herself. And the audience knows, if her mentor does not, that she will not go back, even to the world of Henry Higgins.

Contrast her fate with her father's. Doolittle begins as the free man, unencumbered by morality, marriage, responsibility. But that great maker of the middle class conscience, money, is thrust upon him, and the result: matrimony, stiff collars, the necessity of conforming with the world in which he is trapped. His is a fate worse than mere death, as Eliza's is better than mere life.

Shaw called *Pygmalion* a romance, but he was more accurate in referring to it later as a parable. Early audiences sometimes complained because the action did not end as the game of love and marriage should—with Eliza putting Freudian slippers on the feet of Henry Higgins. But the parable comes out exactly right for a comedy about creative evolution: a social contract for the twentieth-century world of upward mobility.

Without becoming statistical I think it safe to say that no subject has so completely possessed our comic stage as this one of wooing and winning (or failure to win). I could as easily have chosen five or twenty-five other playwrights who employed it for the same purposes as my four or five examples, or for purposes that time does not permit me to touch on. And, in spite of Freud and the pill, it has not lost its attraction or its fascination for playwrights and playgoers.

Above all it is *the* great subject for comedy from Noah's wife to Doris Day, for the marriage (which is its usual conclusion) is not an end but a beginning. Comedy abjures the finality which is the essence of the tragic experience; its conclusion is not surrender but the compromise that tells us that life will continue. It is a precious assurance, and the whole repertory of comedy dins it into our doubting ears.

We have been taught that drama grows out of religion. Whether or not the anthropologists are right, it is certainly true that all great drama is a celebration of life, and that comedy's special function is to celebrate *living*. The rituals of tragedy are sacrifice and death; the ritual of comedy, as I have tried to show, is marriage. The tragic action is a quest for finality; the comic quest for a social contract culminates as a prelude. In tragedy the other Aristotelian elements are antagonistic: time is running out and place is a prison. In comedy they are cooperative: there is time to heal, and place is a launching pad into the future.

I think these generalizations are true even in the latest fashion: the so-called black comedy (tragicomedy?). Those who are waiting for Godot will continue to wait, and the final curtain of *Play* immediately rose so that the action might be repeated. There are perhaps two significant differences in the new fashion: First, the plays tend to be one-act plays (even when they last a full evening); the comic writers seem unable to conceive anything more than characters and a situation; the characters are somehow disabled, and their status remains quo. Second, the plays seem lacking in the

objectivity of great comedy. They are closer to the self-indulgence, or self-pity, of *The West Indian* than the measured evaluation of *The Way of the World*. Comedy has, if I understand the word aright, lost its cool.

Just as the last world war was breaking out, S. N. Behrman wrote a play called *No Time for Comedy*. Perhaps that title might be applied to the present era. But I cannot help thinking there is something adolescent about a society that has no time for comedy, that demands only instant laughter or instant bathos. Comedy, Cicero is supposed to have said, is an imitation of life, a mirror of custom, an image of the truth. It is a mode perpetually out of fashion in Washington, Moscow, Peking, the United Nations, which are more given to farce or melodrama. But while the centers of power may have much to do with the cost of our lives, or the length of our lives, they have little to do with the quality of our lives. To a considerable extent the quality of our lives is determined by our experiences in the schoolroom and, in Giraudoux's words, in that greatest of all adult education projects, the theater. The comic mode, then, deserves our dedicated attention, not so that we go laughing all the way to the grave, but so that we may have at all times an objective and thoughtful reflection of our experience and a measure of its truth.

Reading in the Age of Violence

Nancy Larrick

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If you ask a young teen-ager such a question as, "What are you planning to do ten years from now?" or "What do you think the world will be like in the year 2000?" he is likely to begin with "Well, if I'm still alive," or "If there's anything left of the world."

Perhaps we should not be surprised at this kind of cynicism because the under-thirty generation has grown up under the cloud of the bomb. In their own living rooms youngsters see TV reports of the wholesale slaughter of civilians, dictated by modern military tactics. They learn that our objective in Vietnam is bigger body counts—and then that our official counts are phony.

At first the violence of our world turned our young people to embrace nonviolence. In 1964 and 1965, nonviolence brought a fair amount of success in the civil rights movement and even in the protest against war in Vietnam. There is optimism in the poems written by youngsters in the Freedom Schools of Georgia and Mississippi in those years. Some show faith in a God who's "gonna lift his hand over this great land" and bring "the high and mighty to the ground." [1] Others are confident that civil rights legislation will be effective and that integration will work. Alan Goodner of Clarksdale, Mississippi, wrote

> Segregation will not be here long:
> . . . . . .
> And when it's over . . . the world will see:
> God made us all brothers . . . Even you and me.[2]

By 1969, our young people see that opposition to the black race is stronger in some quarters than ever and the war in Vietnam continues unabated. Their tune has changed from one of peaceful

[1] From "Because I'm Black" by Ruth Phillips in *Freedom School Poetry* (Atlanta: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 1965).

[2] From "Segregation Will Not Be Here Long" by Alan Goodner in *Freedom School Poetry*.

jubilation to the harsh staccato of the new militants whose slogan seen to be "Only violence pays."

Certainly they know that without the student riots at Columbia University last year there would never have been such administrative reforms as are now underway. The phenomenon is worldwide. The French students' rebellion almost upset the whole political system, although the students had sought only to challenge an obsolete university system.

Our young people, knowing full well the details of violent protests at home and abroad and what they seem to be accomplishing, have moved abruptly from a mood of nonviolent and hopeful protest to one of disillusionment and cynicism basic to violence.

This mounting bitterness shows up in a newly published paperback, *The Me Nobody Knows: Children's Voices from the Ghetto*, edited by Stephen M. Joseph and published in January 1969 by Avon Books. It is an anthology of poetry and prose written by 200 slum children of New York, mostly Negro and Puerto Rican, ranging in age from seven to eighteen. Their loneliness and despair are overwhelming.

"For what purpose was I born?" asks V. B., a fourteen-year-old in this group:

> To live a clean life, only to rot away in your grave? To have things your soul desires, prohibited? To be told God is good, but disregard the fact that the world—his so called "creation" is bad.

The despair and hopelessness of these youths is voiced by a sixteen-year-old, Craig, who writes

> I've lived in this big bag of tricks
> And I have struggled to exist
> But I am one of every fix
> Whose mortal brain is so confused

That I don't know which way to turn.
So while I waited my soul has burned.[3]

During our Poetry Festival at Lehigh University on March 29, 1969, five young black students from an inner-city Philadelphia high school read selections from their poetry. Let me give a few excerpts:[4]

First, from Beverly White:

I want what I get not.
I get what I want not.
I know what I need not.
And I want what I have not!

And, from Romani Wardlaw:

sometimes living doesn't
seem worth the bother
I love living but
sometimes I think I'm
going to explode

These are young people who have been involved in city riots themselves, who have watched TV reports of massive violence in Washington, in Newark, in Watts, in Baltimore. They have seen the extremes of police brutality—what the Walker Report called a "police riot" in Chicago at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

The influence of those nights of violence showed up recently when high school youngsters were reading Carl Sandburg's poem "Chicago." You will recall that when the poem was published in 1914, critics protested the poet's blunt designation of Chicago as

[3] Both excerpts. Copyright © 1969 by Stephen M. Joseph.
[4] Proceedings of the Poetry Festival are to be published in late 1969 or early 1970 by Lehigh University.

"hog butcher of the world." To modern youngsters that famous line suggested the brutality of Chicago police last August, not the commercial slaughter houses.

Historically it is not *injustice* which creates rage and accompanying violence so much as *hypocrisy*. This, I think, is what our young people resent more than anything. High school students who are elected to student government as participants in a democracy find themselves gagged by school administrators. "The only decision we have been able to make," reported a youngster in my neighborhood, "is whether to have chocolate milk as well as white milk in the lunchroom."

"Going to college was like getting out of prison," reported a local lad who is now a sophomore at Penn State.

The resentment of these youngsters is indicative of the growing maturity of their interests and social involvement. Dr. Arthur Pearl of the University of Oregon summed up the situation very well when he said, "If Booth Tarkington were to write *Seventeen* today, he'd have to call it *Twelve*." Nowadays even our twelve-year-olds seem to have more critical problems than did seventeen-year-olds of a previous generation—and more inclination to cope individually and in social groups.

The urge to protest—even by violent means—has certainly been strengthened by the mass media. On television, even the youngest child has watched a dead Vietcong dragged through the streets by a rope behind a U.S. personnel carrier. He has seen emaciated migrant workers interviewed in their rotting shacks near one of Florida's most affluent winter resorts. He has watched children beaten back by police clubs or sprayed with tear gas. He has learned about industrial waste beng dumped into rivers and streams in flagrant violation of human welfare.

All of this takes place in every home in this Age of Violence. Children who have grown up calling for Wheaties because the TV voice told them to are drawn into the scenes and, hence, the

issues which come to them through the mass media. Their involvement is both intellectual and emotional.

One reason why they get involved is that they are products of an oral language culture. Our young people have grown up with electronic voices speaking, crooning, or singing to them every waking hour and, indeed, almost every sleeping hour as well.

I am sure you think immediately of radio and television, but don't forget the influence of recordings on today's youth. Eighty percent of all single records and fifty percent of all albums are purchased by those under twenty-five. Many of these records are in the folksong tradition which commands intellectual participation and emotional involvement. Elvis Presley electrified his juvenile audiences in 1956, and such successors as the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, and even Judy Collins and Joan Baez have continued the almost hypnotic spell. All of them tackle issues that are close to young people's hearts and use the language that young people are comfortable with. This is a fractured jargon in which great globs of words form a kind of surrealistic pattern that is only remotely related to the language of the textbooks. It seems more than a century removed from the Victorian elegance of Robert Browning and Lord Tennyson.

We should not be surprised that the impact of oral language involvement in the issues of our Age of Violence is creating a revolution in the reading of young people. It would be easy to assume that, with such a barrage of oral language, children would have no time for printed language. Yet this is not the case, for, given the books that appeal to their interests, modern youngsters read avidly—even while radio or television pours forth a torrent of voices that would move an older reader to the brink of violence. Sound seems to make a young reader feel snug and relaxed.

What do they want to read—these creatures of sound and fury whom we call our children? Let me tell you of a few of their favorites.

In the Bank Street College of Education project in Harlem, we are told that disadvantaged four- and five-year-olds turn constantly to *The Quarreling Book* by Charlotte Zolotow as their favorite. Apparntly they feel at home with a story of quarreling people whose angry feelings spread from page to page. These snarling voices are the ones children hear every day and can identify with.

Somewhat older children become equally involved in *The Jazz Man* by Mary Hays Weik, the story of a lame black boy transplanted from the deep South to Harlem where his father's continued unemployment and mounting family strife cause him to be deserted. This is a harsh little drama but a beautiful one played against a background of music from a neighboring apartment where the Jazz Man and his friends tear the air with their melodies. This is a book you can't put down until the last page. Even then the story gnaws on.

Recently a young teen-ager asked if she might borrow a book she found on my desk. "I've read it four times," she said, "and it's hard to get at the library." The book was *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton, a teen-age author who tells of a fourteen-year-old boy living in the slums with his two brothers in the midst of seething tension and extreme violence. These youngsters are trapped by their environment but fight bitterly to break away, while remaining loyal to friends in the same predicament.

In *Durango Street* by Frank Bonham, a boy on probation from reform school struggles against his mother's constant remonstrances and becomes involved in gang warfare. All the while, he is trying to translate the double-talk of the probation officer who represents the adult world he has learned he cannot trust.

In Detroit Dr. Daniel Fader and his associates launched an experimental reading program at the Maxey School for Boys—a reform school whose students were chiefly nonreaders. A library of 1200 paperbacks was thrown open for free browsing and borrowing. Six hundred books never left the shelves, but 600 were

read eagerly. Boys who had never read before grabbed such titles as *Black like Me* and *100 Years of Lynchings* and devoured them. The *Autobiography of Malcolm X*—a book of 460 pages—electrified them. Other popular titles were *Native Son, Sex and the Adolescent, The Mad Sampler, Of Mice and Men,* and *Prison Nurse.*

Lush and lusty, violent, even brutal. They are the utter antithesis of most of those school-recommended books which one of the Maxey boys dismissed with the pronoucement, "I could have died from bore."

Recently I have been particularly concerned with children and poetry, and here, too, we are finding the increasing influence of our times. In the Lehigh Workshop in Poetry for Children, I have worked with 85 teachers in the past five years and, through them, with close to 1,000 elementary school children. We have tried to learn what poetry children enjoy and what procedures encourage children's pleasure in poetry. By now we are well aware that our oral language culture in this Age of Violence has strongly influenced children's taste in poetry and the nature of their involvement. Let me tell you of some approaches we have found effective.

The first is to start with oral literature, of which every child seems to have a vast storehouse. We begin by asking children to sing or recite the sidewalk chants, jump-rope jingles, and counting-out rhymes which have been handed down for generations. Even young teen-agers are amazed to learn that others know the same rhymes and that parents and grandparents savor these words and melodies. When youngsters discover slight variations in wording, they may be learning for the first time that it is the participants who determine the right or wrong of a rhyme and decide what they do or do not like.

Even the simplest old rhymes invite participation through clapping, stamping the feet, or even jumping rope. Try

Engine, engine, number nine,
Going down the Chicago line

and you will see it is hard not to become involved. Involvement is what these youngsters seem to want. Quite literally they hurl themselves into the act just as they did with Elvis Presley and now with the Beatles and their followers.

We ask them to demonstrate how they use these rhymes and chants on sidewalk or playground. Soon all are involved. Often they record the words on tape or paper, as they prefer, and then improvise new words for more stanzas of their own.

We have done the same thing with folksongs which the children demonstrate in class as their favorites. We are no longer surprised if their list is headed by "The Harper Valley P.T.A." or a TV singing commercial about the ideal detergent. These click with today's children just as the village smithy did with children a century ago.

Often we try some of the old folksongs, such as "Bought Me a Cat" and "Aiken Drum," inviting children to lead the singing and, hopefully, drawing out improvisations from the group. If you can play a guitar—or one of your pupils can—count yourself blessed because a guitar can make any poetry session the most popular time of the day.

One group of sixth graders got so involved in the old song, "She ll Be Comin' round the Mountain," that they added a half dozen new stanzas of their own: "She'll be wearing a miniskirt when she comes, *Yip-pee*," "She'll be wearin' a red bikini, *Wow-wow*," and finally, "She'll be riding in a hearse when she goes, *Boo-hoo*."

The same youngsters brought in recordings of such modern folksingers as Buffy Sainte-Marie and Joan Baez, and we found them swept along by the simple language and stirring rhythms. Many of these songs invite emotional participation as well, especially the modern songs of protest.

All of this leads to our second major effort which is to solicit involvement in poetry whether it be oral or written. One

can hardly resist becon
Comin' round the Mou
encouragement to draw
and rhythm of poetry.

Even five- and six
"One misty, moisty mo
Eight- and nine-ye
as "Buckingham Palace
dramatization by six y
an immediate cry, "Do
whole class joined in on
at Buckingham Palace."

At all ages young
of speech—the younges
own poetic images: "Q
as the cotton in the asp
a meadow of grass," co

All of the time w
verse, unhampered by r
is to have them record t

Frequently a whol
is revealed by what he
repeater, who had also
teacher, "I've written a

How woul
Instead of continuing i
the air so blue"—this y

How woul
Up in the

and followed with a s
pollution. This came f

ming involved in a song like "She'll Be yuntain." After that it takes only a little youngsters into active participation in words

-year-olds will chime in on the words of rning" when they have a chance.

ar-olds will enjoy dramatizing such a poem " by A. A. Milne. On one occasion the youngsters was so effective that there was o it again." On the third go-round the the repeated line, "They're changing guard

g people enjoy creating their own figures t dictating, the older ones recording their uiet as the grass grows," wrote one. "Quiet irin bottle," wrote another. "Green is like mmented a third grader.

e encourage youngsters to create their own hyme scheme or metrical pattern. Our aim heir innermost thoughts and feelings.

e new dimension of a child's understanding e write or dictates. Recently a sixth-grade spent two years in fifth grade, said to his poem." It began:

d you like to go up in a swing

in Robert Louis Stevenson's vein—"Up in oungster wrote

d you like to go up in a swing
air so foul?

trong indictment of local industry for air from a slow learner whose name had been

proposed for special education in the next semester. Although reading and writing were difficult for him, his oral language was as mature as his interests. To him air pollution was of deeper concern than a child's swing.

Finally, from our workshop we have learned to introduce the poems modern children prefer, not what we as adults prefer or what has been the traditional poetry of childhood. We have found, first of all, that young people like straight talk in their poetry, not poetic diction. John Ciardi wins them immediately with his blunt talk about custard made with garlic and the waffle that is like a manhole cover. In his own way, David McCord is equally direct and conversational:

> Every time I climb a tree
> I skin a leg or scrape a knee . . .[5]

"He sounds like us," was the comment of one of his fifth-grade fans.

Many of the modern poets win a following because they write of situations familiar to present-day children who have had more experience on an escalator than sliding down a haystack. They are conditioned for Patricia Hubbell's "Concrete Mixer" and Vachel Lindsay's "Factory Windows Are Always Broken." E. B. White's "Dog around the Block" (*sniff*) is hilarious to them because the situation and the rhythm are real. Young readers who are unmoved by the fantasy of "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat," written by Edward Lear more than 100 years ago, will absolutely gloat over Eve Merriam's "Alligator on the Escalator."

There is always a response to the poem with an emotional tug. It may be a humorous pull, as in "Alligator on the Escalator," but it may be deeply tragic, as in "A Sad Song about Greenwich Village" by Frances Park (from *The New Yorker* of September 17, 1927),

[5] Copyright 1952 by David McCord. From *Every Time I Climb a Tree* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967).

Youngsters may not know about Greenwich Village, but most of them have known the loneliness of

> . . . even when she's frightened
> There's nobody to care.

They make the poem their own.

Children are able to put themselves into the place of each suppliant in *Prayers from the Ark* by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold: the elephant who begs forgiveness for his awkwardness, the mouse who is always spied upon, the monkey who prays that one day someone will take him seriously, and the ox who pleads for time to plod, to sleep, to think. Children who have met this book of poetry invariably list it as the one they prefer above all others—although it was published originally for adults. The poems are real to them because they can become involved in the plight of each animal who offers a prayer.

This sense of reality is the major reason why children and young people are attracted to poems. One teen-ager, speaking of a book of city poems which she enjoyed, said, "This is real. The poetry we get at school is all covered over with the beautiful."

When younger children reject a poem, they almost invariably explain, "It's too sweet." I have come to think that this is the most damning thing a child can say about a poem. Yet much of the literature we have offered youngsters is sweet—and thus very different from the world they know.

The impact of the mass media in our oral language culture forces children to demand participation in literature, whether oral or written. If they do not become involved, they are accustomed to turning to another channel. Many an English class is filled with youngsters who have become psychological dropouts simply because they have been faced with literature which is not real—in their sense of the word—and they have been taught as though they were little pitchers waiting to be filled.

The mass media have demonstrated that it is more satisfying to be deeply absorbed in literature than to have it applied externally. The Age of Violence has given children a daily diet of realism—sometimes brutal, even sordid—but never impersonal and never dull.

I have never seen deeper commitment than that of youngsters today—provided they have reading matter that appeals to them and the opportunity to become involved on their own terms. The challenge to teachers is tremendous; the opportunity is unlimited.

Composition as the Center for an Intellectual Life

Walker Gibson

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I begin with a truism so familiar to you that I hesitate to repeat it. This is the truism that our teaching of English composition, by and large, has for years been a shambles. In the schools, it is the area where teachers feel most at sea, confessing themselves most in need of self-confidence and assistance. In the colleges, especially in the universities, it falls characteristically into the least experienced hands, where it is pawed and plied into a thousand inchoate shapes. The composition teacher, as everybody knows, is underpaid and unappreciated: he can show no verifiable results, he has no respectable theory; his discipline boasts no scholarship but is planned by dolts, manned by drudges, and avoided if possible by everyone.

These, as I say, are familiar truisms, but there is some evidence nowadays that the situation may be improving. In any event my pretentious title—Composition as the Center for an Intellectual Life—is calculated to resist this commonplace despair and to lift one small gleam of encouragement and cheer in the general gloom that is composition. I am going to urge, no doubt too stridently, that a life devoted to composition, including the teaching of composition, need not hang its head in shame nor languish in second-class academic citizenry. To *compose* the world, after all, is what the intellectual life is all about. To compose the world is to compose oneself, to be composed. What more honorable activity could there be than to encourage composing in the young? That at any rate is one argument of this lecture.

Let me try out some high ground, with a little help from Aristotle. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle described the modes and means of persuasion available to a speaker. These are, he said, of three kinds. "The first kind reside in the character of the speaker: the second consist in producing a certain attitude in the hearer; the third appertain to the argument proper, in so far as it actually or seemingly demonstrates." Without doing too much damage to Aristotle's text, we can think perhaps of this famous triad, in our own familiar terms, as consisting of the *speaker*, the *audience*, and the *subject*. Now I

want to consider in a little more detail what Aristotle went on to say about the first of these, the character of the speaker.

"The character of the speaker," wrote Aristotle (at least according to the Lane Cooper translation), "is a cause of persuasion when the speech is so uttered as to make him worthy of belief; for as a rule we trust men of probity. . . . This trust, however, should be created by the speech itself, and not left to depend upon antecedent impression that the speaker is this or that kind of man. It is not true, as some writers on the art maintain, that the probity of the speaker contributes nothing to his persuasiveness; on the contrary, we might almost affirm that his character is the most potent of all the means to persuasion."

Now what do these words of Aristotle imply?

Since the trust we have in the speaker's character is to be "created by the speech itself," then that character is also to a considerable degree the product of a creative act. If I read Aristotle rightly (and this is highly doubtful!), the word character refers not so much to the moral integrity of a human being based on his past reputation as it does to the immediate voice (Aristotle's word is *ethos*) that the speaker is able to create for us on the spot. So the word *character* comes close to some other meanings we have for that word, a character on a stage, a role one plays in an immediate situation.

Think of this for a moment in relation to our own experience as readers and listeners. Sometimes, to be sure, our response to an argument is affected by what we know about the speaker's past repute: we have "an antecedent impression that [he] is this or that kind of man." When the President of the United States addresses us, our response has to be affected by the dignity of his office and what we already know, or think we know, about his probity. More often, however, such is not the case. More often, we simply don't know anything much about the "true" character of the writer or speaker. Reading the newspaper, watching TV, hearing a discussion in a college classroom, we are likely to be in a position where we

have to judge trustworthiness there and then, on the basis of the language and style immediately before us.

The situation you and I find ourselves in will serve as an example. You really know very little about my trustworthiness. You have received, possibly, some bits of propaganda about me, thanks to the good offices of the National Council of Teachers of English. But none of that really helps you very much (though I hope it helps a little) in assessing the truth or the relevance or the usefulness of what I am saying. To do that, you have to rely not on your minuscule "antecedent impression" but on whatever I can do here and now to persuade. And one of my most potent means of persuasion—Aristotle says it may be the most potent—is my endeavor to make myself, in your eyes, worthy of belief. I have to act out an appropriate, an effective, a convincing character.

We will *not* pause for a show of hands as to how I'm doing.

Instead, let me hasten on to point out that to judge a character, as you are doing now, has something in common with the judgments we make when we assess another kind of speaker, the speaker in literature. And I mean now "the character of the speaker" in still a different sense—the speaker of the poem, the narrator of the novel, the voice of the essay. When we read a piece of language, we infer a kind of person addressing us, and we do so from pretty meagre evidence—some words on a page. Our "appreciation" of a piece of writing is a product of many elements in the experience, but one of the most important has to do with the confidence we are ready to place in the voice that addresses us. I take it that when Aristotle uses the word *speaker* he means a live human being in the act of making a speech. But you and I use the word also to point to that created voice, that persona, telling the story or uttering the lines of a poem or "speaking" the words of any piece of verbal composition.

Trust, said Aristotle, should be created by the speech itself. I ask you to consider the enormous power that implies for every one of us, and the enormous responsibility. It means that, if we have the will and the way, we can make ourselves over almost with every

word we utter or write. It means too that we have to be ready to live with the consequences of these words, for it is by them we are judged.

What has all this to do, you are asking, with the practical business of composing—with, for example, trying to teach young people to read and write better? It has everything to do with these matters. Suppose we invent some modest exercises with students in which a central concern is the character of the speaker. We can do so by taking a hint from modern linguists who approach the written language only after first considering the oral one.

Don't students already know a good deal about power and responsibility in their acts of communication, especially their oral communication? Perhaps they know more than we or they realize. Why not ask a student to describe an occasion when, in talking to someone, he "made a bad impression"? Let's imagine some plausible responses to such a question. "I didn't wear a necktie at the interview so I didn't get the job." "I happened to blow cigarette smoke in the professor's face and he gave me a D." "I just didn't have anything to say." It should take no great effort to persuade a student that these acts, all strictly nonverbal, which he may think of as accidental or bad luck, are nevertheless acts of self-expression. Not wearing a necktie, blowing cigarette smoke, maintaining silence—these are all *character-building* acts. Every one of us makes "mistakes" like these every day of our lives. We more or less thoughtlessly dramatize ourselves before others in ways that "make a bad impression." (Sometimes we do so deliberately, of course: there are some people we *want* to offend.) In any case, a psychiatrist would probably remind us that most of our acts of selfhood are not as thoughtless as we think they are.

You will observe that I am straying from language, at least the language of words and phrases. Obviously there are other languages. To wear an open shirt at a job interview is an act of communication as meaningful as any word or phrase—and we can readily imagine interviews at which an open shirt would be just the ticket.

We build our characters constantly in ways that are not strictly linguistic at all. Consider beards, boots, long hair, steel-rimmed glasses—all eloquent symbols in our time for self-portrayal. And the growers of long hair and beards are well aware, surely, of the meanings of their assertiveness. To grow a beard and wear long hair is to state some pretty definite things about oneself and one's relation to society, and young people should be able to say fairly clearly what these things are.

My point is that open shirts and beards and long hair may offer a possible introduction to other kinds of symbolic acts—oral language first, then written language. Let us return to our imaginary student and his "bad impression" and ask him some further questions: When you made that bad impression on someone, what else happened? Who said what, and what was bad about *that?*

Here it should be possible to invite a student to express a little something, however crude, about words and phrases, and his responsibility for the way he uses them. "When I inadvertently blew smoke in the professor's face, I said, 'Sorry 'bout that.' I knew right away that was the wrong thing to say—it sounded flip, and I didn't feel flip, I felt contrite. What should I have said? 'Excuse me, sir'? Or would that have seemed too humble and deferential? Anyway, when I said 'sorry 'bout that' I made a bad impression, and it didn't help my grade any."

Language is a terrifying thing. One can say "Sorry 'bout that" or one can say "Excuse me, sir," and these are choices of style. The one may be too flip, the other too deferential. But one's choice in this matter—as any student can surely see—is a true commitment. One's choice defines, at least for the moment, the character role one is playing, and it sets a relationship, or tone, between speaker and listener. For the consequences of such choices, one has only oneself to thank. In a very simple social situation like the one I've been imagining, a student ought to be able to see that his choices among competing possibilities of language carry consequences and responsibilities, just like his choices about long hair, a beard, or a tieless

shirt. The truth that one is responsible for one's own character—in the speech itself, as Aristotle says—is the truth that I am trying to get the student to see. He sees it already, I suspect; I am trying to get him to express and appreciate it.

Notice that I am not saying that one *should* be responsible for the consequences of one's expression of character. I am saying one *is* responsible. For better or worse—as Sartre and many others have been saying for a long time—we have no choice but to *take* the consequences of our own acts. As an English teacher, I'm especially concerned of course about linguistic acts. But like many English teachers, I have some heady moments when I wonder whether all meaningful acts are not linguistic, in some broad sense of that word. This is a tautology. If an act is "meaningful," then it means something, above and beyond itself. It becomes language.

When we move on to written language, we are in trouble, as every composition teacher knows. Might it not be disarming to discuss candidly with students why we are in such trouble? What is so hard about writing well?

When one considers the shortcomings of writing, as against talking, perhaps it's a wonder anyone can write anything readable at all. We do not have to be McLuhanites to appreciate the limitations of linear print, that "hot" medium. Students who have been considering their own bad impressions, or their good impressions, in oral situations should be in a position to understand why writing comes hard. In writing there are of course no beards or tieless shirts—no possibility of using "the silent language." Furthermore, there is no possibility of exploiting all those subtle modulations of the human voice by which we add reservations, excitement, special significance to the words we utter. Nor can we punctuate our words with gesture, eyebrow, or smile. Linguists, as you may know, have coined the word kinesics to refer to the manifold ways in which our physical bodies reinforce our oral communication. It is enough, assessing the difficulties of writing, to say that in writing there are no kinesics.

But responsibility for character, alas, remains. It is still true that "the speech itself"—the composition—must convey a character of the speaker, and it is still true that this character must inspire trust. Given the limitation of the medium for character acting, it is no wonder that writing comes hard. I see some value in conceding these rather awesome difficulties to students of composition.

On the other hand, why not say something more encouraging about the act of writing as against other media of communication? It is a welcome fact that, for those of us who have learned a degree of comfort in our linear composing, writing offers huge possibilities without which life would be a poor thing indeed. Words in print are a wonderful medium, as even McLuhan would agree. We should want students to name some of the obvious advantages of written compositions: they can be prepared at leisure and with care, they can be revised and duplicated and made permanent and stacked in libraries. More than that, if the writer knows his business he can work in a peculiarly concentrated way on a limited set of symbols. He doesn't have to worry about his beard or his boots; he doesn't have to modulate his voice box or consider his gestures. Instead, of course, what he has to do is translate these manners into the manners of written language—and our job as composition teachers is precisely to be expert and helpful in attending to these translations.

This job, as I have been suggesting, can in my judgment be made more efficient and palatable by means of analogies such as those I have been making, with nonwritten forms of expression. Young people seem to be already fairly adept at producing varieties of selves in their intricate social worlds. They know a lot about the dramatic possibilities of dress, gesture, tone of voice—and getting them to say what they know may be one place to start. How to invite them then to take on vigorously this other way of doing it, with words on paper? Make a *good* impression!

Let me now suggest some further practical implications, for the teacher of composition, of a stress on personal responsibility for the character of one's speaker. For one thing, such a stress may be

one way of qualifying those prescriptive hangups nowadays so unfashionable. Suppose we take a most primitive example—the omnipresent bugaboo of spelling. My approach implies that we do not say, to a bad speller, "You're illiterate: this is an automatic F." Nor am I recommending some meretricious permissiveness like "Never mind, spelling doesn't matter anyway." (It does matter.) Instead I'm proposing that we try demonstrating for the writer the consequences of bad spelling on the character of his speaker. When several words are misspelled in his first paragraph, the consequence is that the speaker loses face, and we lose confidence. This may be irrational on our part, if you like, and the absurdities of English spelling can be frankly conceded to anybody. It nevertheless is a fact that we simply mistrust the argument when the speaker seems to care so little about the crude appearance of his words. We do not "follow" him. Notice the ambiguity in that familiar complaint: the *him* we do not follow is not only an argument but a fellow who has failed to inspire trust. A sophisticated reader may withhold judgment as long as he can in the face of chronic bad spelling, but even he will surely be distracted and put off.

There may also be something not quite attractive, let's admit, about absolutely perfect spelling. We all know the sort of student writing that is so devotedly attentive to the proprieties that it never says anything worth hearing. What sort of character is *that?* Here again the analogy with everyday social life is easily drawn. Perhaps the very best student writing includes a misspelling or two, to suggest a speaker who has his values where they belong!

Much recent pedagogical theory has addressed itself to the encouragement of writing in the young by withholding criticism, by admiring what's good about a student paper and ignoring what isn't. The teaching of "deprived" students, so much on our minds in these days, has obviously fared badly in the past and still fares badly, because of negative schoolmarm attitudes that are inhibiting and cruel. No doubt there are occasions, perhaps whole courses, where spelling and other such decencies ought to be forgotten, and where

negative criticism can be postponed. But finally everyone is responsible for his character, and no one can be *deprived* of that obligation. Eventually, at least, the more one knows about the symbols one is dealing with to produce character, the better character one can and will produce.

There has also appeared very recently, as you probably know, an associated enthusiasm for the dramatic in teaching English, for the importance of role-playing and skits and actings-out. The Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 did much to accelerate this enthusiasm; those of you familiar with John Dixon's little book on the Seminar, *Growth through English*, will recognize my reference. In our own theorizing about our composition work at Massachusetts, the activity of role-playing occupies a central position. Similarly, the encouragement for including "creative" writing at all stages of the teaching process seems to me an additional way to help build verbal characters. But all these are means to an end. For what is the composition teacher's central concern? It is to increase the range of his students' possible options as writers, so that, in setting down characters, students can operate with some sense of what the possibilities are. Surely this is the way to become intelligently responsible for the character of one's speaker.

What then is the *subject* of our composition course, a subject that might reasonably serve as a center for an intellectual life? It is (I am so foolhardy as to say) a consideration of the various ways in which *character* can be expressed in written prose.

But that needs an immediate footnote, lest you suspect that I am promoting an unscrupulous and vulgar program in winning friends and influencing people. That can be a danger, unless we periodically return to Aristotle's triad for a reminder of first principles. What are we trying to do, as writers? We are not simply trying to be liked—that road is a dead end. We are trying to persuade. Now one way to persuade, as we have been seeing, is to manifest oneself as a character worthy of trust. And how does one do that? By attending to the other two members of the triad. One is attentive to

audience, recognizing the commonplace fact that one changes style in relation to one's anticipations about hearers and readers. Even more important, one inspires trust by being attentive to what one is talking about. One is respectful, for instance, toward logic, toward the presentation of evidence, toward—forgive the expression—Truth. (Words like "Truth" came easier to Aristotle than they do to us, for good reason, but I let the word stand with whatever ironies you feel appropriate.) Responsibility for the character of one's speaker means responsibility for what that character is saying about something he considers worth talking about. The speaker's character, in sum, can scarcely be defined apart from the whole act of communication. Choices of style seem to depend on constantly fluctuating decisions we make about every item in the triad—the speaker, the audience, the argument—and perhaps we might want to add something too about the general circumstances. For style also depends on the time of day and the moment in history, where we are and what we are up to and what we think we can do about it all.

Let me turn now, as I approach a conclusion, to that third member of our triad, the argument itself, the subject matter of a composition. Here I think of still another pressure we teachers are facing these days, and that is the well-publicized pressure from students for curricular change. As you know, the favorite word students use when pressing for change is the word *relevant*. We want our courses to be relevant! We want our writing to be relevant! Sometimes, when you ask them what they want to be relevant to, and how, there follows an awkward silence. But nobody can expect students to plan a curriculum, and no one can criticize them for being a little inarticulate in their dissatisfaction. Their dissatisfaction is real, is usually justified, and deserves attention. More than that, it has forced attention.

I wonder if the word *politics* may be as good as any to suggest what many students—and many teachers—would like to be relevant to, in these days. Anyone who attended the most recent convention

of the Modern Language Association, in New York last December, encountered there a good deal of oratory and demonstration calculated to making English teachers more political. Personally, I feel ready enough to include politics, or anything else, in my composition course—the *composition* of politics, that is. My subject, I remind you, is the ways in which character can be expressed in prose. How can I be "relevant" (that is, political) while at the same time being true to my subject?

I am going to conclude with an exercise in reading and writing that attempts to do that—to face a fairly hot political event in terms of the character of the speaker. This is an exercise perpetrated upon our freshmen at Massachusetts something over a year ago, just after the notorious *Pueblo* incident off North Korea. The exercise was by no means an unqualified success, as you will see, but I hope it may serve to illustrate the point.

You may recall that very shortly after the *Pueblo*'s capture, a so-called confession was broadcast by the Communists, attributed to the ship's commanding officer, Lloyd M. Bucher. This and other confessions have come under considerable official scrutiny, as you know, since the release of the *Pueblo*'s crew last Christmastime, and some of the appalling circumstances surrounding the signing of that confession have come to light. In any case I quote now some paragraphs from that confession as it first appeared in the newspapers:

> I am Commander Lloyd Mark Bucher, captain of the U. S. S. Pueblo, belonging to the Pacific Fleet, U.S. Navy, who was captured while carrying out espionage activities after intruding deep into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. . . .
>
> My ship had conducted espionage activities on a number of occasions for the purpose of detecting the territorial waters of the Socialist countries. Through such espionage activities, my ship detected the military installations set up along the coast of the Socialist countries

and submitted the materials to the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Recently, we were given another important mission by the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency—that is, to detect the areas along the far east of the Soviet Union and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The U. S. Central Intelligence Agency promised me that if this task would be done successfully, a lot of dollars would be offered to the whole crew members of my ship and particularly I myself would be honored. . . .

My crime committed by me and my men is entirely indelible. I and my crew have perpetrated such a grave criminal act, but our parents and wives and children at home are anxiously waiting for us to return home in safety. Therefore, we only hope, and it is the greatest desire of myself and all my crew, that we will be forgiven leniently by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

To this purported confession, there was an immediate official reply from the Pentagon. The reply read, in part, as follows:

The statement attributed to Commander Lloyd M. Bucher by North Korean Communist propagandists is a travesty on the facts. The style and wording of the document provide unmistakable evidence in themselves that this was not written or prepared by an American.

The major point which this propaganda utterance attempts to make is that the Pueblo had violated North Korean territorial waters and was in fact violating those territorial waters when the North Korean patrol craft appeared. This is absolutely untrue. . . .

Typical of this propaganda sham is the suggestion that the Central Intelligence Agency had promised Commander Bucher and his crew "a lot of dollars" for their

> mission. Commander Bucher is a naval officer commanding a naval ship and performing a naval mission. He is not employed by the Central Intelligence Agency and has been promised nothing by the Central Intelligence Agency. Nor were any members of his crew.
>
> The entire world learned during the Korean war of the tactics and techniques of communist propaganda and of North Korean exploitation of the men it held captive. This fabrication is but another example. No credence should be given this contrived statement.

We begin with a little elementary work in reading and writing, to justify the Pentagon's linguistic point. For surely the Pentagon is right: the statment could not have been written by an American. I asked my freshmen to analyze the confession in this light, and they leaped to the task with enthusiasm. It is very easy to do.

One could start with the very idiom, or nonidiom, that the Pentagon has quoted in its statement—"a lot of dollars." We simply don't say, in America, a lot of dollars. There's no reason why, particularly, but the fact is that we just never say that, and anyone who does isn't talking like any American. "A lot of dollars would be offered to the whole crew members of my ship." Whole crew members? That is not American English as you and I know it. We say whole crew, or we say crew members, but no American says all three.

Would any American, uncoached, repeatedly refer to the nation we know as North Korea with the official mouthful, "Democratic People's Republic of Korea?" Does one conduct espionage activities in order to "detect" the territorial waters of the Socialist countries? That is not the way we use that verb: there has been a confusion of *detect* with some other verb, such as *survey*. "My crime committed by me and my men is entirely indelible." Perhaps we can spare a moment's sympathy for the North Korean public-relations man, or whoever he was, in his floundering search for a plausible adjective.

What was he looking for? *unforgettable? unpardonable?* In any case he missed.

My freshman students, as I say, responded to this little exercise last year with confidence and vim, though even in such elementary practice there is room for the usual illiteracy. I cannot forget the student who composed the following admonishment: "A better way of writting [sic] this sentence would be, 'The crime committed by my men and I was entirely indelible.'" You wonder whether such a student may not be a North Korean in disguise.

Still, on the whole, most of my students were able to show convincingly that the Pentagon is quite right: the style and wording of this confession could not have been composed by any American. They pointed to such concrete evidence as we have already observed, and more. You will all have perceived other oddities in this curious document. Let us consider the case closed.

But this exercise has a second part. Now, I said to my students, I want you to take a look at the *Pentagon's* style and wording. Is this a voice you can trust? Why or why not?

Not all of my students were able to respond to this invitation. Is it not astonishing how, in an age of youthful revolt and violence, there remains so much obedient subjection on the part of the young to the prose styles of their authoritarian institutional elders? "The Pentagon's reply is concise, factual, and straightforward," wrote a not untypical student. "I believe the Pentagon is a trustworthy voice." But that same student went on to suggest a few doubts: "With the use of propaganda and various press releases it is difficult to obtain the facts." After a few more sentences indicative of considerable internal muddle, this student finally copped out with the blandest of journalistic platitudes: "Can the Johnson Administration prevent or respond effectively to the Communists? Our nation's honor is at stake. Only time will tell whether war or diplomacy can solve the problem." The character that this student has assumed with jargon like that needs no comment.

A few of my students expressed more directly their suspicion

that perhaps all is not well with the Pentagon's style and wording. "The Pentagon seems so sure of itself that I am not positive whether I can trust them either. One of the reasons I feel this is that the Pentagon has not stated exactly why the ship was there, and what it was doing at the time it was captured. It seems to me that this would have quite a bit to do with whether there was reason for confession in the first place."

You will have noted that neither of these students I have quoted was able to operate very effectively as a close reader of prose. (My course had only just begun; perhaps I should take some comfort in that.) Would it have helped these students if they had been better trained at precise observation of rhetorical detail? Would the student's observation that the Pentagon "seems so sure of itself," for example, have been more convincing if the student had pointed to repetitions of some decidedly positive language? *Travesty on the facts, unmistakable evidence, absolutely untrue, this propaganda sham.* What sort of character, in Aristotle's sense, does such language imply? Could the confident assumptions about the purity of a naval officer commanding a naval ship and performing a naval mission—could these have been brought to light? Would an analysis of the Pentagon's final sentence have helped? "No credence should be given this contrived statement." Here we have the absolute modifier *no*, a latinic piece of fancy language (*credence*), and the passive voice of the verb so preferred by all composers of stuffy officialese. The "confession" is not the only statement that's *contrived*.

If this second step in my exercise was at best a partial failure, my third step was utter chaos. "As a student of prose style in this course," my instructions read, "what do you have to say about the current international situation?"

The answer I would have liked—and didn't get—is an answer that generalizes about the characters, the public voices, that inhabit our contemporary political scene. How would I have answered such a question? As a student of style, I feel surrounded by liars. As a student of style, I can detect in the public voices that bombard

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there be (I acters that compose. What more honorable activity can
the young? repeat) than to teach composing, to teach character, to

Porro Unum Est Necessarium

Harold B. Allen

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Harold B. Allen

I have been talking about a certain topic for many years to groups of teachers—elementary teachers, high school teachers, and skeptical college teachers—in fact, ever since the National Council's convention in St. Louis in 1938. Sometimes I've referred to it as Our Birthright, sometimes as the Basic Ingredient, sometimes as the Tie That Binds, sometimes as our Acres of Diamonds. Now I'm calling it the Unum Necessarium. The title of the talk, Porro Unum Est Necessarium, is taken from the Vulgate version of the Gospels, and it doesn't have any reference at all to what I'm going to discuss. Matthew Arnold used it once, too, without biblical reference. I just happened to like it. It means, of course, "Therefore one thing is necessary": "One thing is indispensable."

I know from experience that teachers of English are quite likely to respond that more than one thing is necessary, that, in fact, a very great many things are necessary. Some thirty years ago an inquisitive college professor tried to find out how many things English teachers thought they were supposed to be doing. He found 1481 objectives listed in print. Probably not all would have been described as necessary, but quite likely several hundred would have been. Today I'm saying that one is necessary—indispensable—necessary in the sense that it alone makes our profession one profession. This unum necessarium is the tie that binds us together.

During a month, a week, perhaps even a single day, you do have many objectives in your classroom. You are concerned with helping your students to write and speak more effectively. That is, you are teaching composition, and in so doing you help them to spell and punctuate and organize and select suitable words and arrange them so that they make sense. You are concerned with your students' ability to read a poem, a play, a story, so that the very act of reading becomes such a meaningful experience that they want to repeat it with other poems and plays and books after school has been left behind. Asked what your work is, you reply, "I teach English."

But what is English? Your colleague who teaches French is

likewise concerned with composition, and he also pays attention to spelling and punctuation and organization and suitable words and their arrangements. The French teacher is similarly concerned with the students' ability to read a poem, a play, a story, so that the reading becomes a meaningful personal experience. He may be less likely to attain what he wants, but that is what he wants, nevertheless. What distinguishes your job from his? Clearly the basic distinction is that he teaches composition in the French language and literature in the French language, while you teach composition in the English language and literature in the English language. The English language, our language, is the one thing necessary to define us as teachers of English.

Now recognition that the language is a component of our teaching is, of course, not new. The Committee of Ten of the National Education Association three-quarters of a century ago declared in its famous report that English is a discipline compounded of literature, composition, and language. This tripartite view of our subject has recently gained new prominence through its promulgation by the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board. When the Commission declared that the "three central subjects of the English curriculum are language, literature, and composition," it went on to make a statement that has been largely overlooked in the flurry of subsequent protestations of lip service to the tripartite concept. The Commission said: "The study of language should permeate all the work in English; specifically it should include . . . (c) systematic study of word derivations and change in word meanings, (d) mastery of the forms of usage characteristics in the spoken and written discourse of educated people, (e) some competence in modern linguistic analysis through the study of modern English grammar. Such study should be both for use in speaking and writing and for the pleasure that comes from the acquisition of knowledge."

What is significant about the full statement is not the specific

recognition of language, literature, and composition as three subjects but rather the concept that the study of language should permeate all the work in English. If it should, then language is not simply a third subject: it is the core, the foundation without which the two others could not exist. Without the English language we would have no English literature to teach: without the English language we would have no English composition, but the language would exist without either literature or composition. Our language is the only thing needful, indispensable, in the English curriculum. It is upon a solid foundation of work in the English language that a sound English program must rest.

But even a casual visit to a few schools suggests that when the Commission spoke up not very many people were listening. A full-scale survey confirms that suspicion. In 1968 there was published the National Study of High School Programs, directed by James R. Squire when he was executive secretary of the National Council of Teachers of English. It was jointly sponsored by the Council and by the United States Office of Education and published by Appleton-Century-Crofts. This survey was an intensive investigation of the English programs of 158 outstanding high schools in forty-five states, largely in urban and suburban communities. What Squire and his associates discovered about the place of language in these programs is pretty dismal. If language provides the solid foundation, then most high school curriculums either are built on shifting sand or lack any foundation at all.

In the 1609 classes that were visited, only 13.5 percent of the teaching time was concerned with language. But even this 13.5 percent was largely devoted to prescriptive teaching of "wrong-right" contrasts in grammatical usage. Evidence from a concept checklist filled out by the teachers revealed further that what language attention existed was marked by a vast confusion of purpose and by general lack of awareness of recent developments in the field of linguistic applications.

"One disappointing discovery," Squire reported, "was the absence of attention to the linguistic aspects of literary study. In view of the emphasis on literature in many of these programs, a greater concern with the language of literature—choice of words to express key images, texture of language, rhetorical and expressive features—might be expected. Only an occasional teacher seemed to concern himself with such matters, however. . . . Secondary school teachers by and large have yet to realize that the study of the language of literature offers an important bridge between the literary and linguistic components of the English program."

But Squire also lamented the confusion about usage and the almost complete lack of awareness of the rich variety of fields of language study significant for the high school student. To most teachers, concern with the language meant concern with *do* and *don't* rules. Many of those who somehow had learned of changes in the approach to language study were still unwilling to use new ideas and new content because, they argued, linguists hadn't yet made up their minds. They said that they would use language content when linguists decided once and for all upon the rules of the new grammar and established an analysis that would remain fixed because it was final. Teachers in any field are going to have to wait a long time, indeed, for Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth in social studies, and chemistry, and biology, and art, and music, is as remote from man as is Absolute Truth in the study of language. Application of that principle will leave us interminably in the same unhappy situation we are now in.

More than one cause can be found for this situation. A basic one, I think, is to be found in the decreased emphasis upon English language study in colleges and universities due in large part to the negative reaction to the dry-as-dust kind of philology imported from German graduate schools early in the century. This reaction was reflected in teacher training as well. Despite the appeal of a nationally prestigious NCTE committee in 1928, the next thirty

years saw little improvement in a picture that revealed almost no insistence upon an informed knowledge of the language as part of the competence of a prospective teacher of English. Two national studies I made in 1937 and 1960 (part of the second was incorporated in the 1961 NCTE report *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*) made it clear that the great majority of teachers had no sound training in the English language at all. Certainly without such training a teacher understandably is insecure in the devising of new materials and is reluctant to consider using textbooks in which the new language content appears. But whatever the causes, the unhappy fact is that most English curriculums throughout the country still deprive students of adequate information about their language heritage.

We have heard a great deal lately about the culturally deprived student. I submit to you that all students, black or white or brown, rich or poor, are culturally deprived when teachers of English do not open for them the door to awareness of the extraordinary wealth of human understanding provided by informed teaching of the English language. We who teach English can open that door. We fail them if we do not open it; and no amount of special pleading about lack of time and materials and preparation, no insistence upon the priority of literature, can quite cover up that failure. We are their hope; we must not fail to justify that hope.

If now we do open that door, over the elementary and secondary years of school and first year of college, what should we offer on the other side? I am going to annotate here some of the language topics that I would suggest as desirable for treatment in the school program. No one topic should necessarily be considered as adequately treated in any one unit or in any one year. Because I like the concept of the spiral curriculum, I would indeed propose that more and more of each topic be introduced in successive years so that the student is never allowed to get the impression that he's reached the end, that he knows all about it. So at this time I am not suggesting how

a topic should be divided or sliced for sequential treatment: I am simply describing the topic content. Here are ten topics.

Certainly one topic must be the nature of language itself. This is so central that I think I can assert that the other topics actually derive from this first one. We can consider the nature of language in terms of three general concepts: (1) language is learned behavior developed from a biogenetic potential in a cultural context; (2) the community, through its individual members, not only produces language but changes that language continually as the needs of the community itself undergo change; (3) language is a system of agreed-upon oral symbols by which man can communicate meaning to his fellows—both in time and in space.

The first concept rests upon what is known about how people acquire and develop their language and about the effects of this process upon the cultural context in which the learning takes place. The most recent extensions of linguistic theory in terms of the thinking of Noam Chomsky have merged with the work of some psychologists, particularly Eric Lenneberg, with respect to what was once a discarded notion—the notion of innate ideas. This notion was popular two hundred years ago; behavioral psychology tossed it out the window in this century. But increasingly it seems to be true that the child does not come into the world with a *tabula rasa*, with a completely blank mind. Chomsky plausibly insists that the infant could not possibly learn to speak by depending solely upon a trial-and-error process even if repetition of correct forms is reenforced by the approval of parents or other children. The child too soon acquires the power to produce sentences he has not heard for us to believe that his power is based only upon what Skinner has called "operant conditioning." Other primates, Chomsky points out, have the same physical apparatus—lungs, a larynx with vocal cords, a movable lower jaw, a tongue, and lips—but with the most assiduous teaching over two years an intelligent chimpanzee brought up in a home like a child did not develop speech. True, as yet we

know very little about how a child learns the complicated grammatical rules of the language and how he acquires his vocabulary. But all that we do know suggests that the entire process is a fitting of what is new into an innate propensity, a genetic potential with which he is born. It is a process that in turn strongly influences the individual's human behavior, particularly as a human being communicating through language to other human beings.

The second concept rests upon what has been learned about language history and language variation. We know a great deal now about the history of our own language both in itself and in relationship to the many political and cultural changes that have affected it—the Danish invasion of England, the French domination after the Norman conquest, the English Renaissance, and the rationalism of France in the eighteenth century. We know something now about why and how language varies so much in social and spatial dimensions. The dialect geographer lets us see how differences in words and sounds and grammatical forms are associated with different regions in the United States and England; the sociolinguist, with his research in Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Washington, is beginning to identify for us the corresponding differences among various social classes and ethnic groups, particularly in the critical urban population; the psycholinguist is offering new information about how language varies in its use according to the situation, the mood of the speaker, his purpose, the degree of intimacy between speaker and hearer, the aura of formality or informality, the presence of a third person observing the communication, and so on. We learn from this research how rather naive, even downright wrong, is the long-accepted simple division of language forms into two classes labeled correct and incorrect and into three levels called formal, colloquial, and substandard.

The third concept rests in part upon the exciting, even revolutionary, work of modern linguistic science, particularly within the past ten years. From the structural linguists of the 1930's and

1940's we have learned about the surface system of sounds and grammar and structural grouping—the phonemes, the morphemes, and syntax. From the present-day transformational grammarians we are learning about the below-surface grammar, the deep structure, of our language, and for the first time we are getting answers to questions that no preceding grammarians have been able to solve. No school grammarian, no structuralist, for instance, was ever able to specify just what the relationship is between, say, *the mad dog* and *The dog is mad*, or between *The dog barked all night* and *The dog's barking all night kept me awake*. The transformationalist can do it. He is helping us to see how the engine of language actually functions inside. He gives us some of the satisfaction that a man feels when he can not only drive a car but also understand the theory and working of a gasoline motor—and perhaps even attempt a few minor repairs!

This third concept rests also upon what the linguist can tell us about the symbolic function of language. This is the function that has to do with meaning, with linguistic semantics. How do words mean? As I stand making the noises of a speech, what mysterious process enables me to get across to the audience something of what I have in mind? What leads me—and you—to choose now one form and now another when the same underlying meaning is to be communicated? What does this appropriateness to the situation and the speaker have to do with word meaning? And what does this appropriateness have to do with the effectiveness of what we say on a given occasion? Can we fairly judge the quality of a communication without knowing its effect upon the person hearing it or reading it? (In other words, can we really tell whether student writing is good or not without reference to its effect upon the readers the student was writing for?) Can we fairly judge appropriateness, and hence effectiveness, without distinguishing between the characteristics of speech and those of written communication?

These three concepts upon which the first topic rests serve as

the underpinning, then, of the remaining more specific topics as well.

The first topic, you recall, is the nature of language itself as a special communication code used only by human beings. The second topic is that of the structure of language, of English in particular. It would comprise a description of at least two approaches to the system of English, a structuralist grammar and a transformationalist grammar. I would suggest strongly that this topic is worth studying for its own sake, just as we study chemistry or biology or history. If the structure and functioning of the atom and of the cell is an exciting mystery to study, so also is the structure of the English morpheme, our smallest meaningful unit; so also is the complex hierarchical structure of the sentence, even the surface structure with its interlocking units of predication, complementation, modification, and subordination. For even this grammar can be drawn upon in helping students to gain an understanding of the intrinsic significance of structure in human learning and in all human activity. But even deeper insights result from an introduction to the deep grammar revealed now by the transformationalist approach. Here we understand grammar as a set of rules which, rigidly followed, account for all acceptable sentences in the language. Even though most of the research is still ahead, it seems fair to say that transformational grammar has already explained many problems that previously had not been answered.

Unlike the structuralist, who inductively observed language as manifested in recorded speech, the transformationalist deductively proceeds from a theoretical concept of sentence to a description of any given sentence. He is interested not in the actual performance of a speaker at any one time, with all his interruptions and hemming and hawing, but rather in the speaker's underlying competence. He assumes that each of us has a basic competence that is not matched by actual performance. We all know better than we do. The transformationalist argues that we cannot get a good picture of that competence simply by looking at sentences as produced. The gram-

mar that describes this underlying competence, a theoretical grammar, he considers the significant grammar of a language.

During the past few years some people have been using the expression The New English so as to imply that the term refers to nothing but grammar. But grammar, whether structural or transformational (or tagmemic or stratificational), is by no means the totality of The New English. It by no means comprises all of the language content for the schools.

A third topic, related to the grammar but here treated separately, would be the structure of the sound system English-speaking people use when they talk, and then the relationship of the sounds to our system of spelling. This topic would call for some treatment of how we produce the sounds of speech, how they are changed in various ways when we talk, and how over the years they have been rather inaccurately represented in the written system, the spelling. Why do we have an *l* in *would*? Is it the same *l* found in *could*? Why an *e* at the end of *love*, and is it the same *e* as found in *bake*? Why does *ea* represent one sound in *meat* and another in *bread*? Is our spelling really a mess, as some people have asserted, or is it regular and sensible 95 percent of the time, as some linguists have said? Is there a systematically regular relationship between the stressed vowels of, say, *produce* and *production*, *ignite* and *ignition*, *repeat* and *repetitive*, *provoke* and *provocative*? If the relationship is consistent, what does that suggest for the teaching of reading? When we respell words from other languages, do we really follow a system? When we pronounce words from other languages, do we follow a system? Why do some people say /gəraj/ and others say /gəraž/, and the British say /gǽraž/? Why do I say /i/solate, and most young people say /ay/solate? There are answers to these questions, answers that help a student move a little way into the fascinating mystery of language as a system—not as chaos.

A fourth topic could be words themselves, not as shapes or

morphemes but as symbols of meaning. It has been said that the meaning of a word is as much of one's total experience as one focuses sharply upon at the moment of utterance—or of writing—or of hearing and listening. How do I get your meaning, and how do you get mine? *Hash* can refer to a roughly ground mixture of meat and potatoes, usually baked, or to a kind of stew. How can I be sure of what I'm going to get when I order hash in a restaurant? If a word can point to more than one meaning, what clues help us to select the intended meaning? What does *pitcher* mean in "That's a good pitcher"? In "He's a good pitcher"? How does a word get a second meaning, anyway? Or a third, or a fourth, or a fifth? Is there anything systematic and orderly about change in meaning?

Does the early meaning of a word necessarily remain in a later meaning? Does the etymology of a word really help us to see what is thrown into that sharp focus? Certainly the present-day meaning of a word is not determined by its history. A book is not made from a beech tree; a girl with glamour is probably not admired just because of her grammar. But a deeper awareness of the rich complexity of word meaning can come from some understanding of how an idea changes and proliferates over the centuries. A student who looks up the word *ban*, for instance, when he reads "a ban on student demonstrations," finds its remote source in a root meaning "to speak." He finds that it is related to all these borrowed words: from Italian, *bandit*; from French, *banish, abandon*, and *banal;* from German, *ban* itself and *banns* (as to post the marriage banns); from Latin, *confession* and *profession, fame, fable, affable, fate* and *fatal, infant, infantry, fairy, multifarious, nefarious, preface,* and *blaspheme* (and its cognate *blame* from French); and from Greek *phoneme, phonetic, phonics, telephone* and *phonograph, euphony,* and even *euphemism.* Such an awareness helps a student to follow the rapid shifts of meaning in the special vocabulary of the teen-ager; it can be drawn upon

to clarify how words and meanings are used by an individual for his own identification and, especially, for group identification. Experience shows that students get intensely enthusiastic when offered an opportunity to work with words in this way.

From words in general we can go to a fifth topic, those words that we call proper names—of people, of places, and of other specific unique things. Is your name what you say, or what you spell? Do two girls whose spelled name is *Renee* have the same name or different names if one is called /riyniy/ and the other is called /riné́y/? How does one's name identify or describe its possessor? Why do authors choose certain names for their characters? How does one's name affect his relationship to other people? Why are nicknames like Billy and Jimmy and double names like Bobby Lou common in the South? What popularity shifts occur in the naming of children? How are they related to changes in society? How did the local place names originate? How about church names, street names, apartment-house names, names of commercial products, names of rock-and-roll groups? This topic is of lively interest to students; a name-study project is one that provides for any student a sense of achievement.

The source book for much information about words and names, of course, is a good large dictionary. But the value of this resource is rarely understood and appreciated. So the sixth topic deals with lexicography. When did dictionaries first appear? What were their beginnings? How have their purposes changed? What is the difference between, say, the 1604 Cawdry and the 1730 Bailey? What did Samuel Johnson do for dictionary making? What special value has the Oxford English Dictionary and its satellites, the Middle English Dictionary and the Dictionary of American English? How have they influenced commercial dictionaries? How can you tell whether a dictionary is good or not? What common misconceptions exist about dictionaries? Can a good dictionary be good for all purposes—home, school, and office? How do even good dictionaries differ among themselves?

Although one or two of the previous topics have suggested the past, they have not really dealt specifically with the history of our language. That's the seventh topic, then, a view of our language through time. Here I'm suggesting not the history of its vocabulary but of its internal make-up, its structure. What really is the difference between Old English and Modern English? In the deep structure of our grammar is a rule specifying possession. In Modern English this rule can produce, say, *the throne of the king* as well as *the king's throne*. In Old English it produced only *se cyninges stol*. What thoroughgoing change in English structure does this difference indicate? What major change resulted from the simple increase of stress upon the beginning of a word? What exactly happened to English sounds between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries that makes English today so different from, say, German or Dutch in pronunciation?

Variations over the years are probably not so meaningful in a student's life, though, as present-day variations. They constitute the eighth topic. Variations are of two kinds. One results from the fact that language changes in space. Your dialect is not quite the same as my dialect. What historical facts of our settlement history have dictated the distribution of these major sets of regional variations—Northern, Midland, and Southern? What precisely are the principal characteristics in these main dialects, and what are some of the subregional distinctions within them? What do you call the strip of grass between sidewalk and street, a metal utensil in which you fry eggs, the center portion of an interstate highway, bread made of cornmeal, corn eaten on the ear, the channel around the roof to catch rainwater, a ditch beside a road, a soft drink, and a slender insect that hovers over the water? I call them *boulevard, frying pan, median, johnnycake, corn on the cob, eavestrough, ditch, pop,* and *darning needle*. Does that make me right and you wrong? Or you right and me wrong? Or does each dialect have its own dignity? Are the differences indications of superiority or inferiority, or are they simply different?

Today attention is being placed upon variations in another direction, vertical. These are differences we call social rather than geographical. Their study belongs in the field called sociolinguistics. This field is live now because of the national concern with people who have not enjoyed a full measure of educational and economic opportunity—generally black people but also millions of white people in certain areas. I would consider it most important for this topic to include an objective presentation of the distinctive characteristics of different social varieties of English as they are correlated with various known socioeconomic patterns. Students need to be helped to realize—and so do many teachers—that the linguistic features of a nonstandard dialect are not mistakes or errors. They are simply the systematic and organic characteristics of a different dialect, with its own independent subsystem. That student who says, "She mad" rather than "She is mad" is not wrong; he's not making a mistake. To recognize this significant linguistic fact is not to define what is to be done about the situation, if anything. But the linguistic fact must be recognized before any relevant educational program can be soundly planned. Social variations include those groups of variations that constitute slang and argot and occupational vocabularies too. They provide a rich mine of material for students, who are bound to be familiar with the special lexicon of at least one social group, if not of several groups.

That topic leads directly to the ninth topic, that of usage. Here the first thing to be pointed out is the popular confusion between grammar and usage. Grammar is the description of a language system. That is one thing. Usage is the relationship between a language form and the complex nonlinguistic situation in which it usually occurs. That is quite a different thing. Because the nonlinguistic situation—involving speaker and audience, time, place, nature of the occasion, purpose of the communication, degree of formality and informality, and the like—because the

nature of the situation must include people and because people do have social class correlations, usage inevitably is related to matters of attitude. An unbelievably vast amount of nonsense has been spread around about usage. But we who teach English don't have to accept that nonsense. It's high time that we had a sound unit in a school program that would help students to understand what an extraordinarily complex matter usage is, how deep-seated are people's reactions to various language forms other people use, and how evil is the myth of an absolute correctness. Can it be honestly said that there is a right and wrong usage if we are talking about a native speaker of English? If so, what judge is to make the decision and by what right? What is the actual source of authority, if there is any, in usage? What is the relationship of usage to style? Does anyone, a teacher or a student or anyone else, always speak in the same style? What is meant by code-switching, and how does it relate to some current social issues? And to schoolroom practice in the language? A special subdivision of this topic concerns euphemisms and obscenity and profanity. Students can be helped to look objectively at the phenomena of euphemism and the current shift in attitudes toward many terms only recently considered unprintable if not unspeakable.

A final topic—and there could be others, of course—is that of the nonlinguistic features that accompany the use of language. Here I refer to tone of voice, facial expression, gesture, body stance, distance from others during a conversation, body position during a discussion, and the way in which one touches another as an act of communication—the kind of handshake, the touch on the shoulder, and so on. Consideration of this topic opens to the student an unsuspected area of attention, yet an area subject to his own observation and study and, with help, analysis. How does one adjust in these respects to different situations? Would you gesture more in talking to one person or more in talking to an audience? What kinds of gestures do you use? What do they

mean? These are some of the questions students can ask themselves.

Now in discussing these topics I have neglected to say something that should have been indicated earlier perhaps. That is that these topics, and other language topics, should all be taught in relationship to the teaching of literature and composition. An integrated sequence will link up an historical word study unit, for example, to the study of a Shakespearean play. The study of American dialects can be linked with the reading of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. The study of slang and euphemism can accompany *The Catcher in the Rye*. The content of the language topics is also content for the student compositions over the junior and senior high school years: the little research projects produce good papers. More, the study of both structural grammar and transformational grammar is directly related to practice in developing improved sentences and a more mature style.

These matters I simply touch upon here by naming them, for this is but one paper and not a course. But in closing let me say this to those of you skeptical whether a language-oriented curriculum will work, whether language actually does provide the most substantial basis for the work of the entire English program. What I have been talking about is not visionary. The University of Nebraska Project English materials have a major language component. The University of Oregon Project English materials likewise have a major language component—and they are now appearing in a complete series. The University of Minnesota Project English materials, which in considerable measure I have been describing here, are now available in more than thirty units. Since these are separate units they can be used separately or in combination, and the teacher can adjust them to regular textbooks and to the literature and composition demands in a given school. I might add that our Minnesota units have had the benefit of a thoroughgoing revision after their use in sixty-six cooperating high schools in Minne-

sota. They are eminently usable in the classroom as they are. Then there also is *What Is Language* (units 7–12) from the Indiana University Curriculum Series. Information on all these is available from the ERIC Clearinghouse at the headquarters of the National Council of Teachers of English.

In this talk I may have tried to cover too much territory, to say too much. But the subject is so important that I felt impelled to give you as much as possible in this short space. What I have said has been directed toward one objective, that of indicating the rich resources of our language for content in the school program. This material, I hope, has justified the eminently acceptable position that the heart and soul of our profession of English is indeed our linguistic heritage. Our language *is* the one thing indispensable in the English curriculum, the unum necessarium.

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